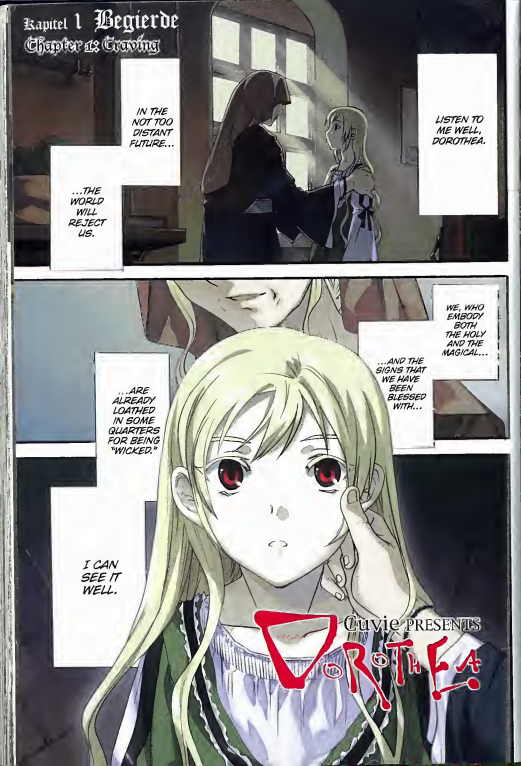
volume
1
PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT
VOROTHEA
Cuvie


Kapitel 1 Begierde
Chapter 1: Craving
IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE...
...THE WORLD WILL REJECT US.
LISTEN TO ME WELL, DOROTHEA.
...ARE ALREADY LOATHED IN SOME QUARTERS FOR BEING "WICKED."
...AND THE SIGNS THAT WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH...
WE, WHO EMBODY BOTH THE HOLY AND THE MAGICAL...
I CAN SEE IT WELL.
Cuvie PRESENTS
DOROTHEA

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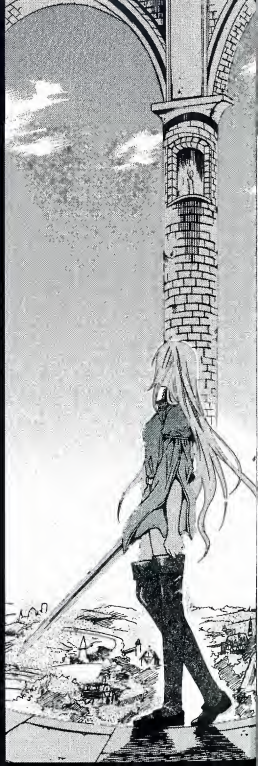
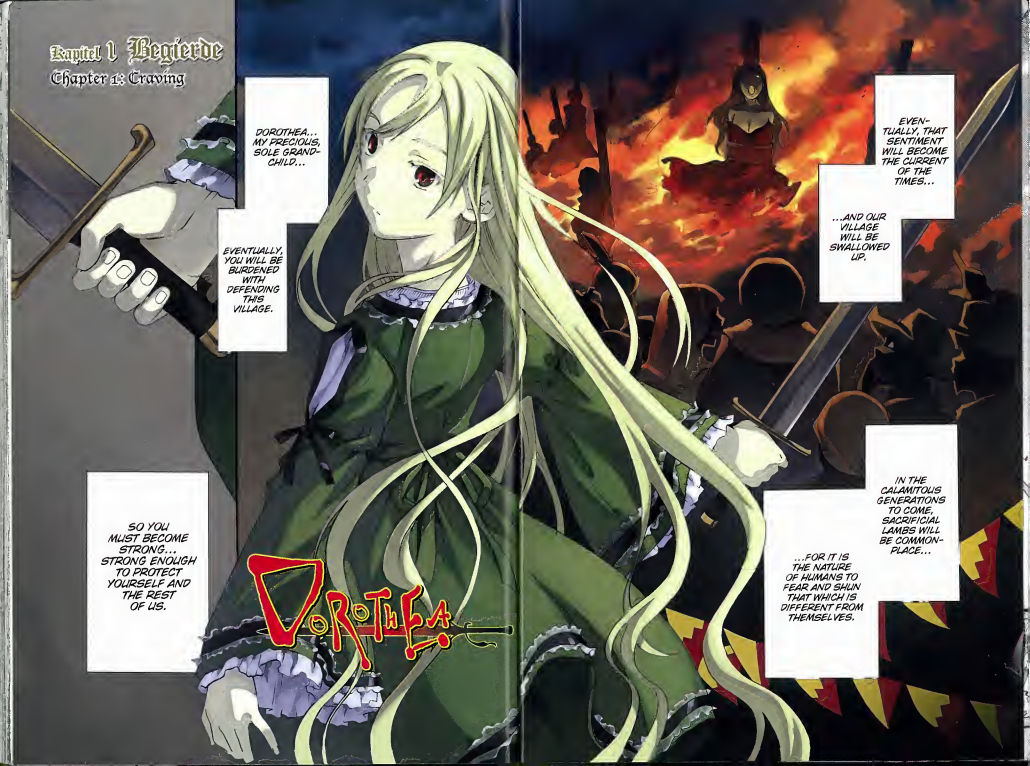
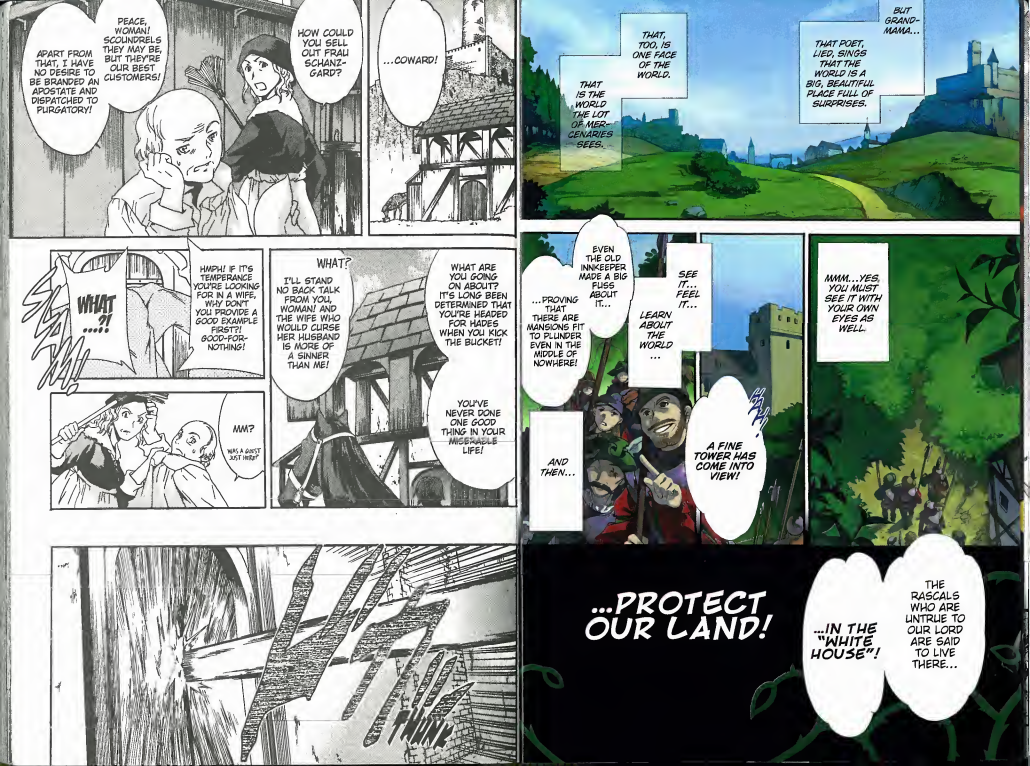
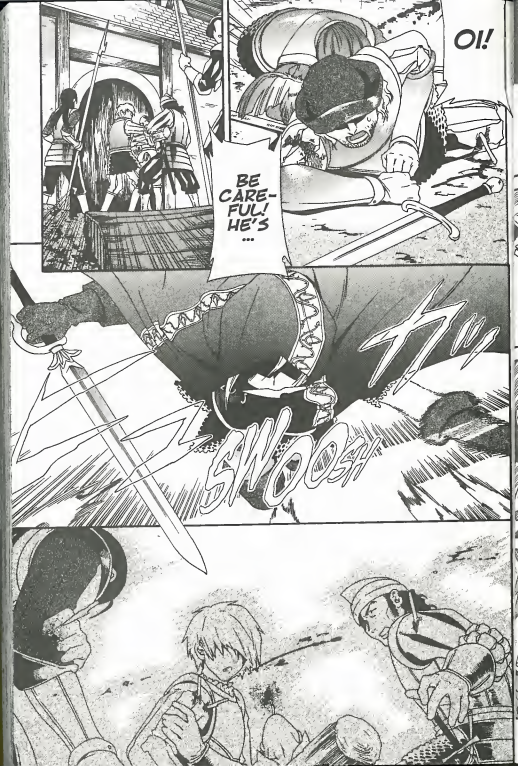



Kapitel 1 Begierde
Chapter 1: Craving
DOROTHEA... MY PRECIOUS, SOLE GRANDCHILD...
EVENTUALLY, YOU WILL BE BURDENED WITH DEFENDING THIS VILLAGE.
SO YOU MUST BECOME STRONG... STRONG ENOUGH TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND THE REST OF US.
DOROTHEA
EVENTUALLY, THAT SENTIMENT WILL BECOME THE CURRENT OF THE TIMES...
...AND OUR VILLAGE WILL BE SWALLOWED UP.
IN THE CALAMITOUS GENERATIONS TO COME, SACRIFICIAL LAMBS WILL BE COMMONPLACE...
...FOR IT IS THE NATURE OF HUMANS TO FEAR AND SHUN THAT WHICH IS DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES.


PEACE, WOMAN! SCOUNDRELS THEY MAY BE, BUT THEY'RE OUR BEST CUSTOMERS!
APART FROM THAT, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO BE BRANDED AN APOSTATE AND DISPATCHED TO PURGATORY!
HOW COULD YOU SELL OUT FRAU SCHANZGARD?
...COWARD!
THAT, TOO, IS ONE FACE OF THE WORLD.
THAT IS THE WORLD THE LOT OF MERCENARIES SEES..
BUT GRANDMAMA...
THAT POET, LIED, SINGS THAT THE WORLD IS A BIG, BEAUTIFUL PLACE FULL OF SURPRISES.
WHAT ?!.....
HMPH! IF IT'S TEMPERANCE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IN A WIFE, WHY DON'T YOU PROVIDE A GOOD EXAMPLE FIRST?! GOOD-FOR-NOTHING!
MM?
WE'LL A GHOST JUST THERE!
WHAT?
I'LL STAND NO BACK TALK FROM YOU, WOMAN! AND THE WIFE WHO WOULD CURSE HER HUSBAND IS MORE OF A SINNER THAN ME!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT? IT'S LONG BEEN DETERMINED THAT YOU'RE HEADED FOR HADES WHEN YOU KICK THE BUCKET!
YOU'VE NEVER DONE ONE GOOD THING IN YOUR MISERABLE LIFE!
...PROVING THAT THERE ARE MANSIONS FIT TO PLUNDER EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE!
EVEN THE OLD INNKEEPER MADE A BIG FUSS ABOUT IT...
SEE IT... FEEL IT... LEARN ABOUT THE WORLD ...
AND THEN...
A FINE TOWER HAS COME INTO VIEW!
MMM...YES, YOU MUST SEE IT WITH YOUR OWN EYES AS WELL.
...PROTECT OUR LAND!
...IN THE "WHITE HOUSE"!
THE RASCALS WHO ARE UNTRUE TO OUR LORD ARE SAID TO LIVE THERE...

DOROTHEA...
KEEP YOUR HEAD INSIDE, HANS!
IN THIS WEATHER ...
THUNK
BUSH
HEAVE HO
GRAND-MAMA! THEY'RE TRYING TO BREAK THROUGH THE GATE!
DON'T WORRY, CHILD. IT'S STURDIER THAN IT LOOKS!
BUT WHERE ARE THE KNIGHTS?
HAVE THEY ABANDONED US AGAIN?
WE HAVE HER TO PROTECT US.
...HERR SUN WILL STRIKE YOU WITH HIS RAYS!
THOUGH IT MAKES SENSE FOR THE HERETICS WHO LIVE WITHIN TO BE CAUTIOUS ...
AFTER ALL, WE LIVE IN DANGEROUS TIMES!
WHEW! FINALLY LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GOING TO GIVE!
THIS IS SOME GATE!
WE MAY AS WELL BE STORMING A CASTLE!
THANKS TO YOU, YOU BAS-TARD!
HAHAHA!
NO MISTAKE ABOUT THAT!
SWISH
...WHY SHOULDN'T WE BE THE ONES TO PUT IT TO GOOD USE?
BUT WHEN SACRILEGIOUS BEHAVIOR RESULTS IN THE CONFISCATION OF FORTUNE AND PROPERTY ANYWAY...
MM?
DID YOU JUST HEAR SOMETH--


OI!
BE CARE-FUL! HE'S ...
SWOOSH

WHAT THE DEVIL...
...ARE Y--
UH?!
AAH!!
SLASH
SWI SH
TAK
ULP!

YAAA!!
CL
ANG
?!

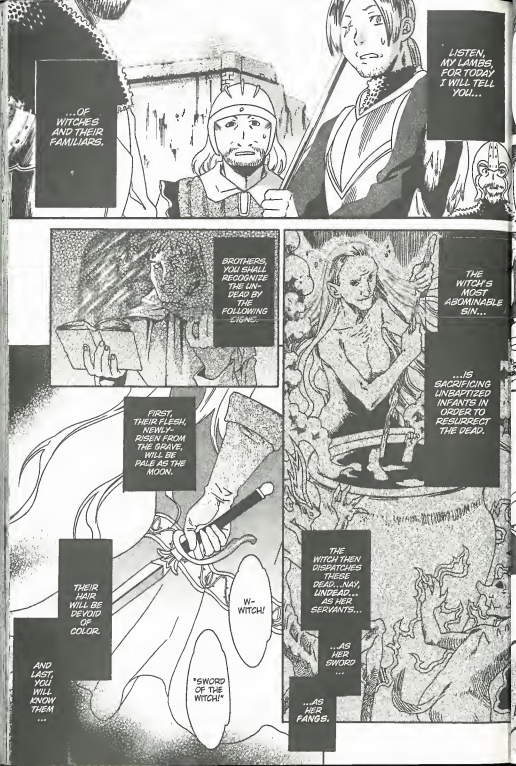
WHOOSH!
AGH... MY ARM!
CHRIST'S BLOOD! HE CUT MY ARM!
EH? LOOK AT HOW SMALL HE IS!
THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPON, FOOL, AND HAND OVER ALL YOUR MONEY AND FOOD IF YOU WISH TO GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE!
FOR WE ARE THE LANDSKNECHTE, MERCENARY SOLDIERS FAMED FOR OUR VALOR AND FORTITUDE!
OFFER UP ANY MORE RESISTANCE AND THIS PIKE, WHICH I'VE USED TO DEFEAT MANY A FRENCHMAN UPON MANY BATTLEFIELDS, SHALL BE RUN THROUGH YOU!
CONSIDER IT AN HONOR, COUNTRY BUMPKIN.
DECEIVE ME NOT...
..VILE INDITS...

?!
THUK
CHATTER
THUK
THUK
GO AWAY!
WE'RE THE REINFORCEMENTS!
KEEP THROWING!!
W-WAIT! STOP IT!
THUK
THUK
THUK
AH...!
YOU BRATS!

CHUD

RED EYES ?!?!

UNH!
CHUFF
CLANG
WHUMP
UH ?!?
ARE YOU A CHILD OR... DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE A WOMAN! LET ME HAVE A LOOK AT YOUR...
WELL, YOUR BODY IS MUCH LIGHTER THAN I EXPECTED!


LISTEN, MY LAMBS, FOR TODAY I WILL TELL YOU...
...OF WITCHES AND THEIR FAMILIARS.
BROTHERS, YOU SHALL RECOGNIZE THE UNDEAD BY THE FOLLOWING SIGNS:
THE WITCH'S MOST ABOMINABLE SIN...
...IS SACRIFICING UNBAPTIZED INFANTS IN ORDER TO RESURRECT THE DEAD.
FIRST, THEIR FLESH, NEWLY-RISEN FROM THE GRAVE, WILL BE PALE AS THE MOON.
THEIR HAIR WILL BE DEVOID OF COLOR.
AND LAST, YOU WILL KNOW THEM ...
W-WITCH!
"SWORD OF THE WITCH!"
THE WITCH THEN DISPATCHES THESE DEAD... AH, LAY, UNDEAD... AS HER SERVANTS...
...AS HER SWORD ...
...AS HER FANGS.

.....!!
UHHH...
UHHH...
UHHH...
KKK...
EEEE !!
URK ...
THE ...
THE EVIL EYE...
AAAGH!
... HUFF
HUFF
HUFF ...
ZAAAA
AAA

THEIR EYES...
GNOOOR !
RRR...
TING
TING
...BY THEIR HORRIBLE PUPILS, DYED BLOOD-RED...
...THE EVIL EYE !!
DEVIL'S AGENT!
VAMPYR?
WHA-?
WHAT ...?
HEY, WE MUST KILL HIM, NAMELY BY PLACE A MURDEROUS CURSE UPON US!
WITH AN EVIL EYE, WE MUST KILL HIM, TELL US HOW!
BEWARE! HE SEEKS TO ATTACK US, IT SEEMS!

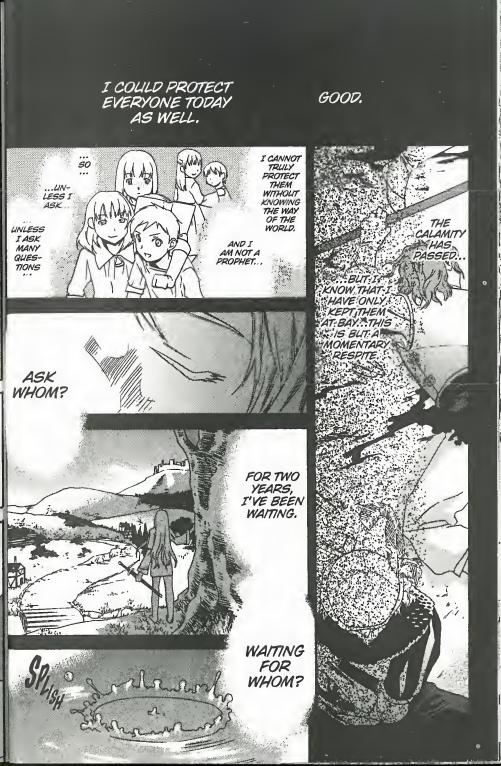
!
REINFORCE-MENTS ...?!
DOROTHEA!
.....
.....
I MISSED ...!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF ..
OH, NO...
GETTING DIZZY..
FWISH

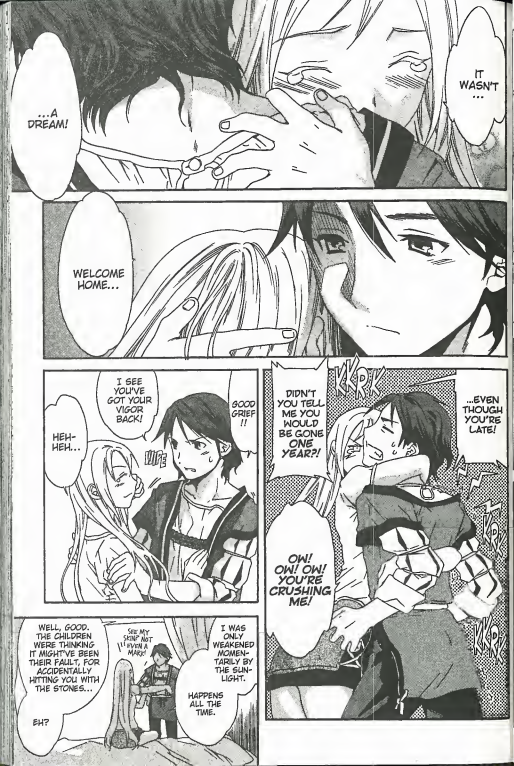
LET'S POUNCE THESE BRIGANDS, DOROTHEA!
AYE!
.....
SIRIUS?
...B...
...BY ALL MEANS!
PANTING
CLOP CLOP
ZAAA
SWISH!

OY! THIS WAY!
THESE ARE THE BANDITS? WELL DONE.
YOU CAN LEAVE THE REST TO US.
LAND SAKES!
YOU FINALLY ARRIVED NOW, EH?

TAKE ME BACK TO THE PALACE WITH YOU.
I WOULD MEET WITH LORD JOHANN.
THE MASTER WILL NOT SEE YOU.
OH, AND WHY NOT? REGARDING THE SECURITY OF HIS TERRITORY, HE HAS A DUTY TO HEAR THE APPEALS OF THE CITIZENS.
BUT YOU ARE A SPECIAL CASE, FRAU SCHANZGARD.
ANYONE WHO PLACES A CURSE UPON HIS LORDSHIP IS NOT WELCOME IN THE PALACE.
HMPH...
I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU SAFE!
ARE THE REST UNSCATHED AS WELL?
I'M SORRY WE ARRIVED SO LATE!
THE FRAGAS IS ALREADY FINISHED!
THIS ONE LOST HIS NERVE...
LADY SIBYLLA!
AND YOU LOT! YOU CALL YOURSELVES SENTRIES?!
IF SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO OUR LADY SIBYLLA...
GYURK?
DOROTHEA?
YOU DID WELL.
NOW I'M SURE YOU HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO TALK ABOUT WITH EACH OTHER. SO GET THEE INSIDE!
SHALL WE, DOROTHEA?
BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU BUILT UP STRENGTH?
STAGGER...
YOU'VE BEEN OUT IN THE SUN FOR LONG MINUTES NOW, BUT...
AH! DOROTHEA!!
HELP!
DOROTHEA!!!
AS SOON AS I BROUGHT IT UP.
OOG...
UUH...

HOW ARE YOU FEEL--
DOROTHEA, YOU'RE AWAKE.
AH...


I COULD PROTECT EVERYONE TODAY AS WELL.
GOOD.
SO...
...UNLESS I ASK...
UNLESS I ASK MANY QUESTIONS...
I CANNOT TRULY PROTECT THEM WITHOUT KNOWING THE WAY OF THE WORLD.
AND I AM NOT A PROPHET...
THE CALAMITY HAS PASSED...
...BUT I KNOW THAT I HAVE ONLY KEPT THEM AT BAY. THIS IS BUT A MOMENTARY RESPITE.
ASK WHOM?
FOR TWO YEARS, I'VE BEEN WAITING.
WAITING FOR WHOM?
SPLASH


...A DREAM!
IT WASN'T...
WELCOME HOME...
I SEE YOU'VE GOT YOUR VIGOR BACK!
GOOD GRIEF!!
HEH-HEH...
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU WOULD BE GONE ONE YEAR?!
...EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE LATE!
OW! OW! OW! YOU'RE CRUSHING ME!
WELL, GOOD. THE CHILDREN WERE THINKING IT MIGHT'VE BEEN THEIR FAULT, FOR ACCIDENTALLY HITTING YOU WITH THE STONES...
EH?
SEE MY DEAR? NOT EVEN A MARK!
I WAS ONLY WEAKENED MOMENTARILY BY THE SUNLIGHT.
HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.

GYURK...
GYURK!
GYURK...
GYURK...
DOROTHEA...

EH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY...
GYURK ?
THE TRUTH IS, I DIDN'T INTEND ON RETURNING.
GYU...
GYU...!!

.....
HAHA!
WERE YOU WORRIED ABOUT ME?

IS LIFE OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE SO ENJOYABLE?
ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU FORGET COMING HOME?

DORO-THEA ...

TAP
MM?
IN THE TWO YEARS YOU WERE AWAY WITH THE MER-CENARIES ...
...YOU CERTAINLY GREW A LOT.
YOU'RE TALLER THAN ME NOW.

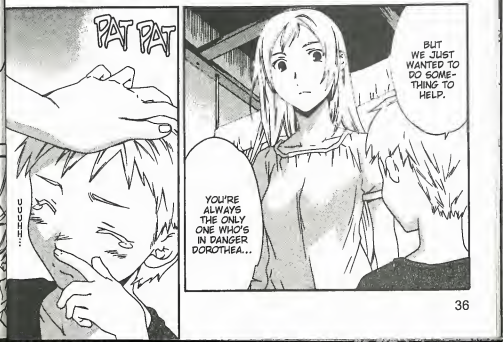
WHAT?
YOU'VE BECOME BEAUTIFUL WHILE I WAS AWAY.

BLUSH
T-THAT'S RIGHT! I HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL!
THAT'S ENOUGH CLOWNING AROUND! IT'S TIME YOU FULFILLED YOUR PROMISE!
ANYWAY, GYURK...!
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A WHIT SINCE THEN, DOROTHEA!
MY MIND IS AT EASE!
YOU'RE STILL THE SAME INSIDE AS YOU WERE THAT DAY TWO YEARS AGO!
GYURK!
CREAK
I'LL COME BACK TOMORROW.
OH... SORRY, DOROTHEA.
RIGHT NOW, I'M KEEPING FRAU SCHANZGARD WAITING!
I THINK IT'D DO YOU GOOD TO GET A LITTLE MORE REST.
...GOODNESS! WHAT DID HE LEARN OUT THERE WITH THOSE MERCENARIES ...?

GOGGLE
!
MM...
MM...!
FOO!
MM!
GWIN
MM?!?
...MMPH?!
HA!
AHA HAHA HAHA HA!!
...ULP!

DORO-THEA!
DORO-THEA!
TUG
WIPE
SO...
...THE "WHITE HOUSE" MAY HAVE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST IT BY THE CHURCH?
WELL...
I WISH WE COULD, BUT...
...ARE YOU TWO GOING TO VISIT THE PRINCESS, LIKE YOU USED TO?
NOW THAT GYURK IS FINALLY HOME...
YOU DON'T WANT TO BE SEPARATED FROM ANY-ONE WHO'S SPECIAL TO YOU, DO YOU?

POP
HOW DID DOROTHEA KNOW?!
WE WERE SO QUIET THIS TIME!
HOW COULD I NOT?
POP
POP
RATS! SHE KNEW WE WERE HERE?!
YOU CAN COME OUT NOW!
AAAAH! WAIT, WAIT! GRAND-MAMA ALREADY PUNISHED US PLENTY FOR THROWING THOSE ROCKS, BELIEVE ME!!
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY, WERE YOU BRATS TRYING TO KILL ME?
SHAKE
DULLARD! THAT WAS JUST GYURK'S IDEA OF A PRANK!
HEH-HEH! GYURK AND DOROTHEA SITTING IN A TREE, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.
WERE YOU CHECKING TO SEE IF YOU STILL LOVED EACH OTHER AFTER TWO YEARS?


PAT PAT
UUUH...
BUT WE JUST WANTED TO DO SOME-THING TO HELP.
YOU'RE ALWAYS THE ONLY ONE WHO'S IN DANGER DOROTHEA...

...ANY COMPLAINTS THAT WOULD AFFECT HER WOULD APPLY EQUALLY WELL TO THE COUNT OF NAUDERS.
AS SHE'S ONE OF THE "WHITE CHILDREN" WHO'S BEEN RAISED HERE BUT NOW LIVES IN THE PALACE...
BUT THAT WON'T HAPPEN...
...BECAUSE OF PRINCESS ELSE.
IN THE ND, EVEN MPIRES SHALL LLAPSE.
I DESPAIR OF THIS WAR-TORN WORLD, WHERE EVEN SMALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ARE FEUDING.
EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN IS MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN I BELIEVED.
YES. AS A PRE-TEXT, SO THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRY OF EMS CAN SEIZE THE WHOLE TERRITORY OF NAUDERS.
...UNDER ONE CONDI-TION.
WHICH IS WHAT?
WE HAVE ATTAINED CONSENT FROM THE REGIMENTAL COMMANDER OF THE MERCENARY CORPS...
RIGHT. THUS IT'S IMPORTANT WE ANSWER THE CALL OF RECRUITMENT FROM BETTINA.
I SEE... IN WHICH CASE, GRAND DUKE SACHSEN AND THE MIGHT OF THE BETTINA HOUSE WOULD COOPER-ATE IN STRIKING DOWN EMS.
THEN ELSE, WHO HAS THE BLO[OD] OF THE BETTI[NA] FAMILY RUNNING THROUGH HER VEINS, IS A TRUMP CARD.
ALL OF NAUDERS' OWN ABLE-BODIED SOLDIERS MUST BE INDUCTED INTO THE CORPS.
THEN THIS LAND'S CUSTOMS AND MY EXISTENCE AS THE MYSTICAL SIBYLLA ...
...ARE ALSO THEIR TARGETS.
HMPH... I'M SURE LORD JOHANN IS OVERJOYED AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE US DRIVEN OUT.
FRAU SCHANZ-GARD...
ARE YOU AWARE OF THE POPE'S RECENT DISPATCHES?
MMM...
SUCH AS THE ONE THAT REDEFINES "HERETIC" AND "WITCH" AND EXHORTS THE CHURCH'S RUNNING DOGS TO COOPERATE IN DESTROYING US?
YES. IN TRUTH, MANY TERRITORIES HAVE BEEN HIRING INQUISITORS IN RESPONSE TO THIS.
OH-HO.

I'VE BECOME STAINED WITH BLOOD.
ACTUALLY ...
SPEAKING FRANKLY, I SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME BEFORE YOU AGAIN.
BOTH MY GRANDCHILD AND I WERE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING YOUR RETURN.
NOW, TELL ME WHY YOU EXTENDED YOUR SOJOURN AFTER ONE YEAR.
YOU DIDN'T FORSAKE US.
I DON'T BLAME YOU IF YOU'VE LOST TRUST IN ME...
...I HADN'T PLANNED ON COMING BACK AT ALL BECAUSE OF THAT.
I BELIEVE IN YOU.
THAT'S ALL I'M TALKING ABOUT RIGHT NOW.

...BUT IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, I'LL FORCE THOSE USELESS GUARDS INTO SERVICE FOR US!
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER TO AVOID CONCOCTING A GRAND SCHEME TO STAND UP AGAINST THAT PAPAL DISPATCH...
CICILE
CICILE
DANA
.....
...GYURK.
RUSH!
...YES?
HMM ...
LET'S DO IT.
THERE WAS THAT MATTER WITH THE BRIGANDS TODAY. SO I WON'T LET LORD JOHANN SAY A WORD OF PROTEST.
QUIVER
I TAUGHT YOU THAT MUCH.
WHEN YOU'RE IN CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE, YOU DON'T AVERT YOUR EYES.

...GOD'S HOOKS, DOROTHEA! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?!
WERE YOU LISTENING IN?
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO REST UP!
MARVELOUS BIT OF EAVESDROPPING, THEN...
I HEARD EVERYTHING FROM THE PART ABOUT OUR COUNTRY BEING IN DANGER OF INVASION.
I'M DIFFERENT THAN I WAS BACK THEN.
I'M NOT THE GYURK THAT YOU REMEM...
I WAS TROUBLED WHEN YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T GOING TO RETURN HOME.
BESIDES THAT, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGELY EVER SINCE YOU CAME BACK.
.....
ARE YOU SAYING ...
SMACK

THANK YOU.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
.....
GRAND-MA...
SOB SOB
CLICK
SWISH
...EXCUSE ME...

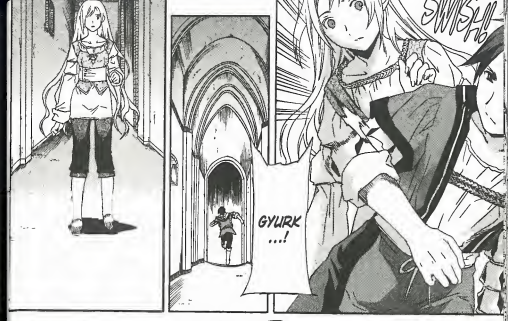
I'D BE ABLE TO BRING HOME MANY AMUSING STORIES TO REGALE YOU WITH.
IN THE BEGINNING, I IMAGINED...
I...
EVEN THEN, YOU WERE...
THEN YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ME AT ALL!
D-DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY...?
I'VE BEEN WAITING TWO YEARS FOR THIS DAY!!
.....!

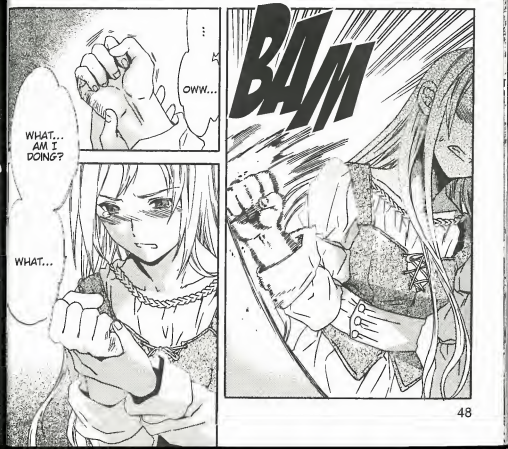
WAIT... WHAT?
CALM DOWN, DOROTHEA!
HOW CAN I CALM DOWN?!
...BUT YOU PROMISED THE PRINCESS AND ME THAT WHEN YOU DID GET BACK, YOU WOULD TELL US ALL ABOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD!!
THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT COMING BACK HOME...
THAT'S WHY YOU'VE EVEN FORGOTTEN YOUR PROMISE?!
I TRUSTED YOU!
YOU SAID THAT YOUR EYES WOULD BE MY EYES, SO I STAYED BEHIND!
BUT INSTEAD, YOU CAME HOME WITH NO INTENTION OF TELLING ME ANYTHING!
.....
WHY ...?
YOU WEREN'T EVEN GOING TO TELL ME THAT MY VILLAGE... MY FAMILY... IS IN DANGER!!
IS MY STRENGTH... MY SWORDSMANSHIP... REALLY THAT INEPT...?

HOW DO YOU THINK I FEL...?
.....
...GYURK?
THAT LOT THIS AFTER-NOON...
THEY WEREN'T SIMPLY BANDITS.
THEY WERE...
GASP

!!
GYU...
BAM!

I FEEL LIKE A FOOL. TRUSTING IN GYURK ALL THIS TIME...
...WHILE HE...
...HAVE I BEEN DOING...
...THESE PAST TWO YEARS?
...HAS ONLY LOOKED DOWN UPON ME!

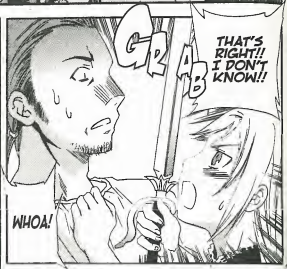

SWISH!
GYURK ...!


BAM
OWW...
WHAT... AM I DOING?
WHAT...

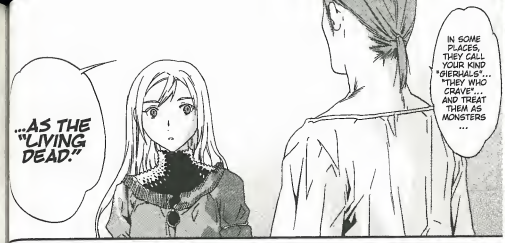
DO YOU THINK I'M STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT ON A BATTLE-FIELD?
WELL, WELL... YOU MAY HAVE A WAYS TO GO WITH THE LONG PIKE AND AXE, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE SWORD, I COULDN'T TELL YOU WHICH ONE OF US IS THE TEACHER.
TO HAVE THE SWORD KNOCKED FROM MY HAND BY YOUR SUPPOSEDLY WEAKER PHYSICAL STRENGTH...
HERR ZYGMUND...
MM?
.....
WELL, YOU ALREADY HAVE PLENTY OF GENUINE BATTLE EXPERIENCE, DON'T YOU?
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT EVERYONE CAME OUT UN-SCATHED.
I AM ANGRY, BUT IT'S DIRECTED TOWARDS YOUR SON.
YOU MUST BE ANGRY ABOUT THE BUSINESS WITH THE BANDITS.
AS ONE OF THE GUARDS IN THIS DOMAIN, PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY.
IT ISN'T NECES-SARY.
AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
GYURK, EH?
GOD'S WOUNDS, BUT THAT BOY HAS BEEN NOTHING BUT TROUBLE SINCE THE DAY HE WAS BORN!
SHING
SHING
SHING
CH
AA
NK
WHOA!!
GLAT
TEER
FWAP
...YOU WIN.
RRRR...
WH
SHING

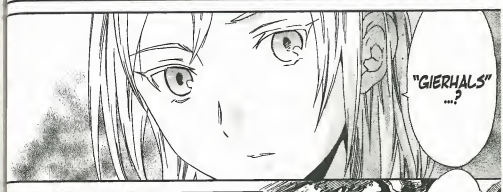
BUT IF THAT'S ALL, THEN WHY HAVE YOU ALSO BEEN TEACHING ME THE LONG PIKE AND OTHER WEAPONS?
...OSTENSIBLY SO YOU CAN FULFILL YOUR DUTY AS A SWORD SHRINE MAIDEN...
...BUT THE REAL REASON IS SO YOU CAN PROTECT THE "WHITE HOUSE."
CORRECT?
THE PROBLEM IS...
BUT IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS FOR YOU ON THE BATTLE-FIELD RIGHT NOW...
...AND IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR LEVEL OF SWORDS-MANSHIP.
...YOUR APPEAR-ANCE.
AHHH, THAT...I JUST LET MYSELF GET CARRIED AWAY.
YOU CATCH ON QUICK, SO IT'S BEEN FUN FOR ME TO INTRO-DUCE THE OTHERS...
...THAT ONE OF THIS AREA'S UNIQUE CUSTOMS IS KEEPING THE CHILDREN IN THE "WHITE HOUSE" 'TIL THEY REACH ADULTHOOD?
I'VE HEARD THAT OTHERS LIKE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN BORN WITH AS MUCH FREQUENCY IN OTHER COUNTRIES.
BUT DID YOU KNOW...
YOU'RE ONE OF THE "WHITE CHILDREN," WHO HAVE BEEN DEIFIED IN THIS PROVINCE FOR AGES.
SINCE YOU WERE BORN, YOU'VE BEEN TOLD YOU BRING GOOD FORTUNE TO THAT HOUSE.
.....
WHY, WHAT DID MY WITLESS SON DO TO YOU?
AFTER I THREW HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE, IT'S PROBABLY TOUGH FOR HIM TO COME BACK...
...BUT TO RETURN TO HIS HOMETOWN AFTER TWO YEARS AND NOT EVEN DROP BY TO SEE HIS FATHER...
NO...
DON'T TELL ME HE...
NO, NO, NO!
WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE NOT ENTIRELY OFF, BUT...
I THOUGHT NOW WOULD BE THE BEST TIME TO VOLUNTEER.
...DORO-THEA!
I'M TEACHING YOU THE SWORD...
...HERR ZYGMUND...
...I'M GOING TO BECOME A SOLDIER TOO.
HE'S DECIDING EVERYTHING BY HIMSELF AND IS PLANNING TO GO FAR AWAY, WHERE I MIGHT NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN, SO...

GYURK KNOWS...!!

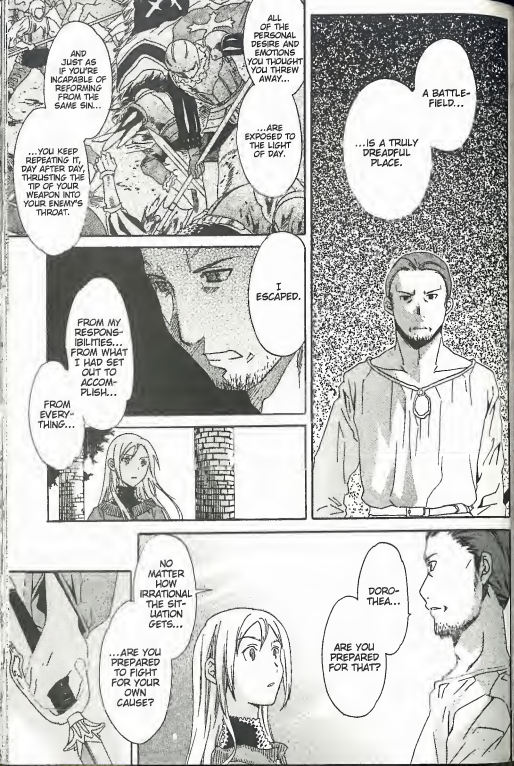

GRAB
THAT'S RIGHT!! I DON'T KNOW!!
WHOA!

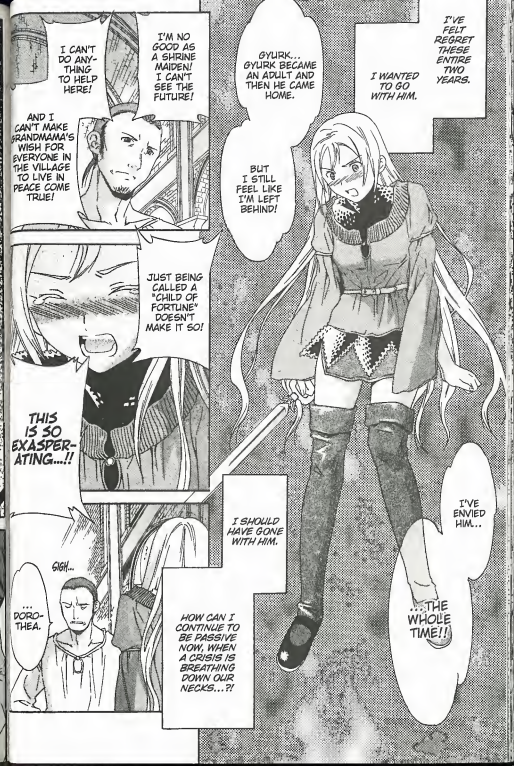
I'M IGNORANT OF THE WAYS OF THE WORLD! BUT THAT'S ONLY NATURAL, ISN'T IT, SINCE I'VE NEVER STRAYED FROM HERE?!
BLIT...
BLIT...

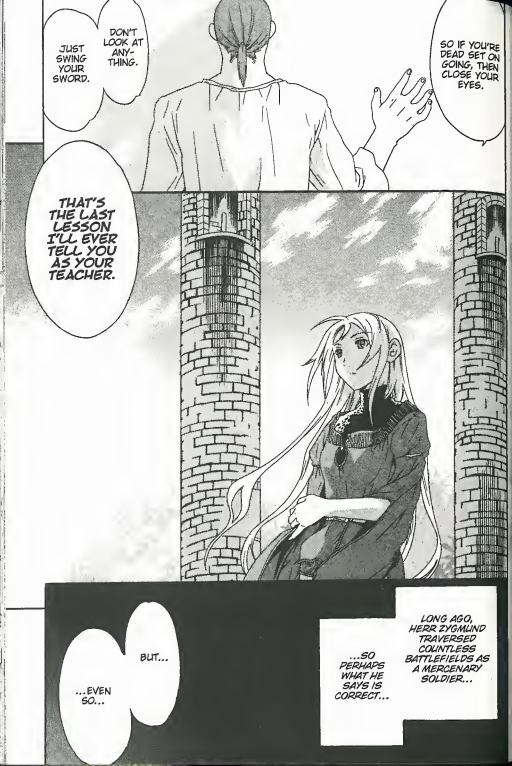

IN SOME PLACES, THEY CALL YOUR KIND "GIERHALS"... "THEY WHO CRAVE"... AND TREAT THEM AS MONSTERS ...
...AS THE "LIVING DEAD."


"GIERHALS"...?

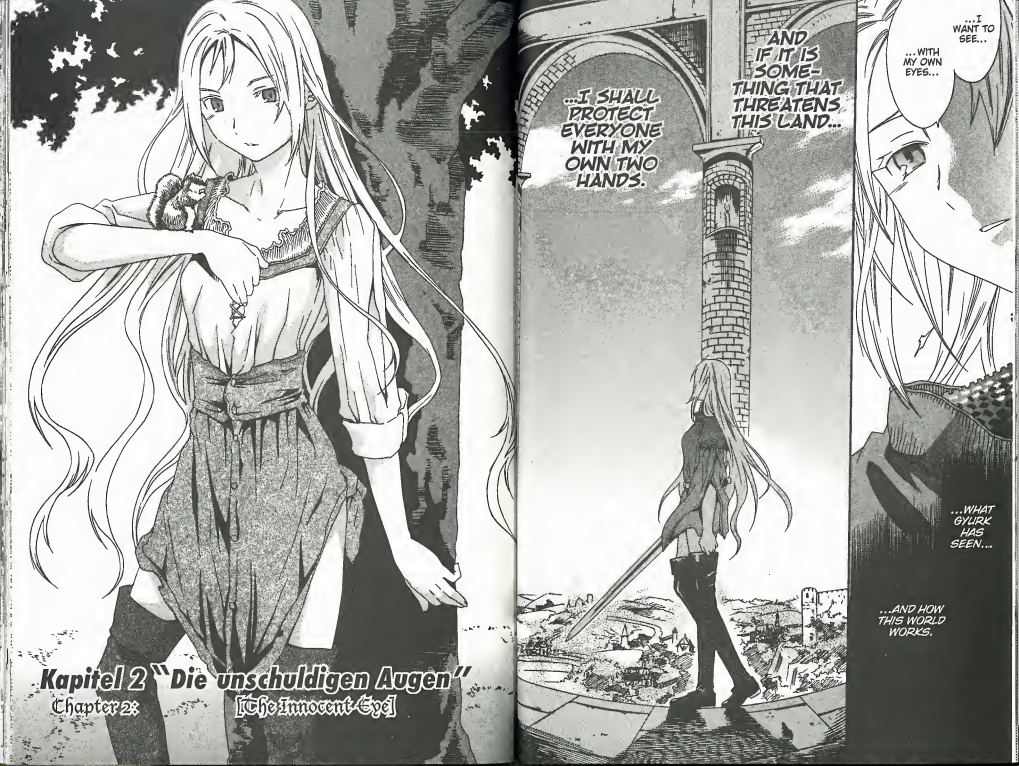
IN ACTUALITY, THE "WHITE HOUSE" WORSHIPS THE EARTH AND NATURE AS A MANIFESTATION OF GOD, YES?
YOU'RE MORE PAGAN THAN HERETIC...AND YET, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH THEY HATE YOU?
...NO. I DON'T KNOW...
I'VE NEVER BEEN OUTSIDE OF THIS VILLAGE...


ALL OF THE PERSONAL DESIRE AND EMOTIONS YOU THOUGHT YOU THREW AWAY..
AND JUST AS IF YOU'RE INCAPABLE OF REFORMING FROM THE SAME SIN..
...ARE EXPOSED TO THE LIGHT OF DAY.
...YOU KEEP REPEATING IT, DAY AFTER DAY, THRUSTING THE TIP OF YOUR WEAPON INTO YOUR ENEMY'S THROAT.
A BATTLE-FIELD...
...IS A TRULY DREADFUL PLACE.
I ESCAPED.
FROM MY RESPONS-IBILITIES... FROM WHAT I HAD SET OUT TO ACCOM-PLISH...
FROM EVERY-THING...
NO MATTER HOW IRRATIONAL THE SIT-UATION GETS...
...ARE YOU PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR YOUR OWN CAUSE?
DORO-THEA...
ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THAT?

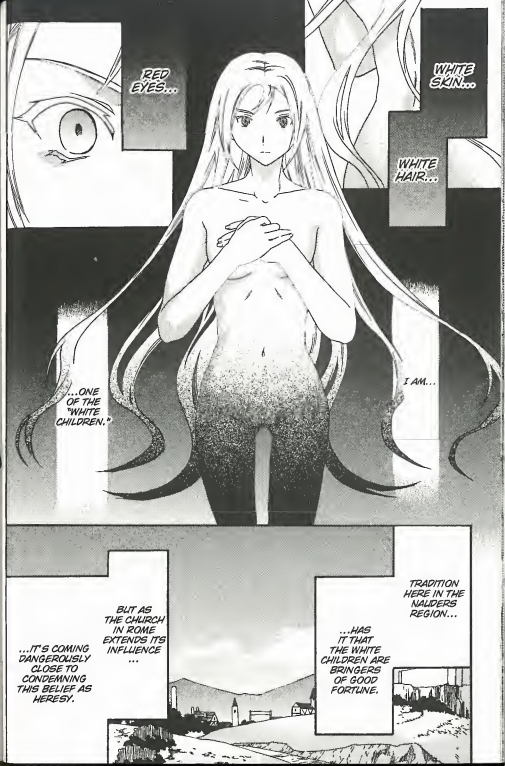

I'M NO GOOD AS A SHRINE MAIDEN! I CAN'T SEE THE FUTURE!
I CAN'T DO ANY-THING TO HELP HERE!
AND I CAN'T MAKE GRANDMAMA'S WISH FOR EVERYONE IN THE VILLAGE TO LIVE IN PEACE COME TRUE!
JUST BEING CALLED A "CHILD OF FORTUNE" DOESN'T MAKE IT SO!
THIS IS SO EXASPER-ATING...!!
GIGI..
DORO-THEA.
I SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH HIM.
HOW CAN I CONTINUE TO BE PASSIVE NOW, WHEN A CRISIS IS BREATHING DOWN OUR NECKS...?!
GYURK... GYURK BECAME AN ADULT AND THEN HE CAME HOME.
I'VE FELT REGRET THESE ENTIRE TWO YEARS.
I WANTED TO GO WITH HIM.
BUT I STILL FEEL LIKE I'M LEFT BEHIND!
I'VE ENVIED HIM...
...THE WHOLE TIME!!

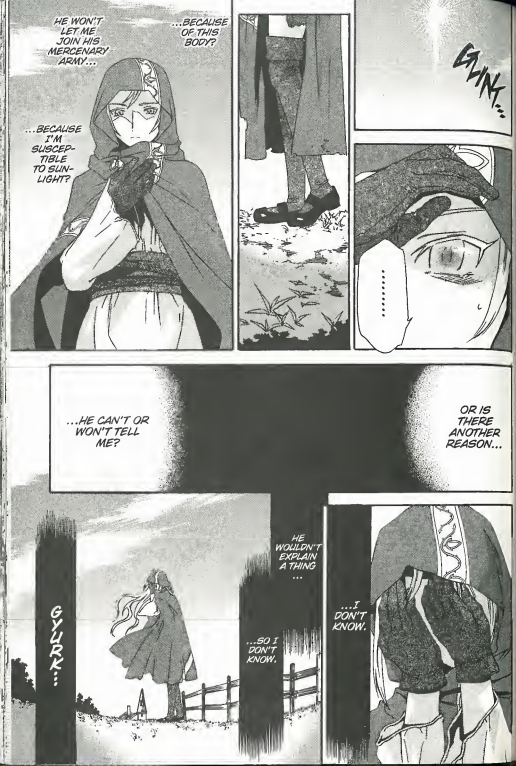

JUST SWING YOUR SWORD.
DON'T LOOK AT ANY-THING.
SO IF YOU'RE DEAD SET ON GOING, THEN CLOSE YOUR EYES.
THAT'S THE LAST LESSON I'LL EVER TELL YOU AS YOUR TEACHER.
BUT...
...EVEN SO...
...SO PERHAPS WHAT HE SAYS IS CORRECT...
LONG AGO, HERR ZYGMUND TRAVERSED COUNTLESS BATTLEFIELDS AS A MERCENARY SOLDIER...

I AM.
EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD, IT'S BEEN MY WISH TO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO PROTECT EVERYONE. TO BECOME THAT STRONG, I'LL DO ANYTHING.
THEY CAN'T SEE IT.
NO, I MEAN THOSE WITH NO FAITH JUST WON'T UNDER-STAND.
.....?
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT AFTER DEATH? I WANT TO PRESERVE THE TRAN-QUILITY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING...
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE SPHERE OF THE PEOPLE YOU SHOULD PROTECT.
BUT A HEATHEN CANNOT SAVE PEOPLE WHO ARE SEARCHING FOR PEACE IN GOD'S COUNTRY.

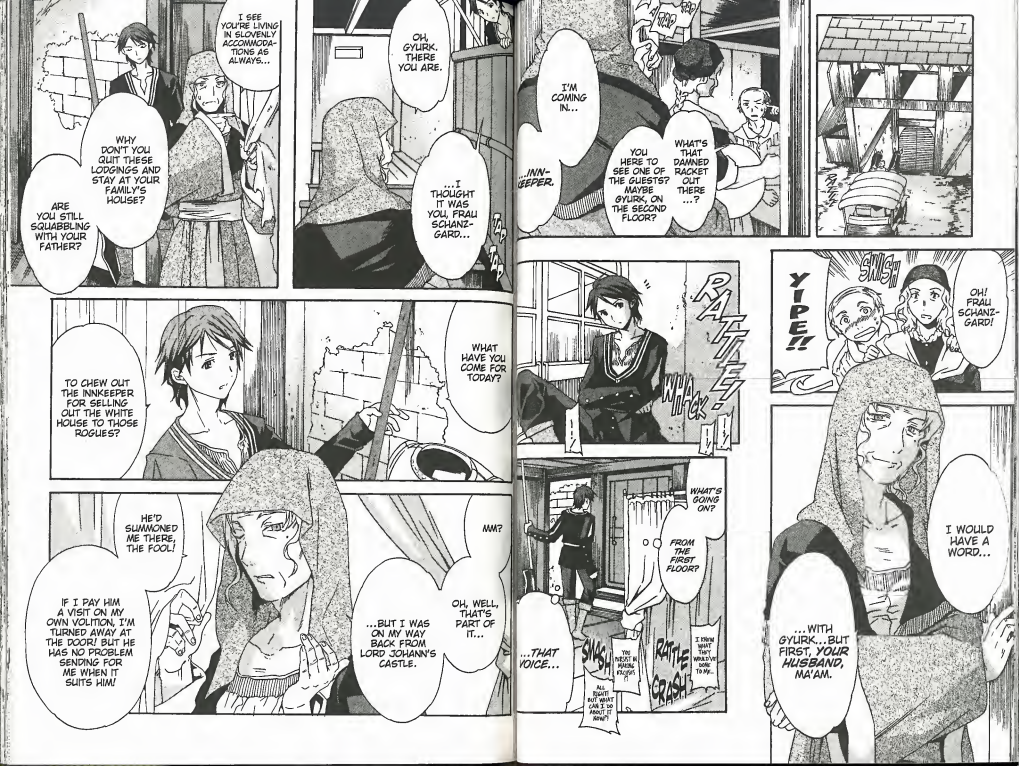

...I WANT TO SEE...
...WITH MY OWN EYES...
...WHAT GYURK HAS BEEN...
...AND HOW THIS WORLD WORKS.
AND IF IT IS SOME-THING THAT THREATENS THIS LAND...
...I SHALL PROTECT EVERYONE WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS.
Kapitel 2 "Die unschuldigen Augen"
Chapter 2: The Innocent Eye

...MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, GYURK, HAS COME HOME AFTER TWO YEARS TO RECRUIT AN ARMY OF MERCENARIES TO FEND OFF ANY ATTACKS.
AS THIS COUNTRY MAY BE IN IMPENDING DANGER FROM AN INCURSION BY EMS...
CURRENTLY, OUR NEIGHBORING COUNTRY, EMS, WITH WHICH THERE'S BEEN MUCH FRICTION, IS COMPLAINING ABOUT OUR WAYS TO THE CHURCH.
I ASKED HIM TO LET ME JOIN THE RANKS TOO BUT ...!!
SWISH!
...IT'S COMING DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO CONDEMNING THIS BELIEF AS HERESY.
BUT AS THE CHURCH IN ROME EXTENDS ITS INFLUENCE ...
...HAS IT THAT THE WHITE CHILDREN ARE BRINGERS OF GOOD FORTUNE.
TRADITION HERE IN THE NALDERS REGION...


RED EYES...
WHITE SKIN...
WHITE HAIR...
...ONE OF THE "WHITE CHILDREN."
I AM...


HE WON'T LET ME JOIN HIS MERCENARY ARMY...
...BECAUSE OF THIS BODY?
...BECAUSE I'M SUSCEPTIBLE TO SUNLIGHT?
GLINK...
.....
...HE CAN'T OR WON'T TELL ME?
OR IS THERE ANOTHER REASON...
GYURK...
HE WOULDN'T EXPLAIN A THING ...
...SO I DON'T KNOW.
...I DON'T KNOW.

PARDON THE INTERRUPTION!
OH...
EH...?
OH, DOROTHEA. ARE YOU LEAVING ALREADY?
SLAM
CLICK CLICK
THUD
WHUNG
IT'S LIKE BESEECHING A WALL!!
HE WOULDN'T EVEN GIVE ME A REASON FOR HIS REFUSAL!
IT'S AS IF HE WISHES TO LEAVE ME OUT IN THE COLD!
UNBELIEVABLE!
DEVIL TAKE HIM!!
RUMBLE


I SEE YOU'RE LIVING IN SLOVENLY ACCOMMODATIONS AS ALWAYS...
WHY DON'T YOU QUIT THESE LODGINGS AND STAY AT YOUR FAMILY'S HOUSE?
ARE YOU STILL SQUABBLING WITH YOUR FATHER?
OH, GYURK. THERE YOU ARE.
...I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU, FRAU SCHANZGARD...
TAP TAP
I'M COMING IN...
..INNKEEPER.
YOU HERE TO SEE ONE OF THE GUESTS? MAYBE GYURK, ON THE SECOND FLOOR?
WHAT'S THAT DAMNED RACKET OUT THERE ...?
KNOCK KNOCK
TO CHEW OUT THE INNKEEPER FOR SELLING OUT THE WHITE HOUSE TO THOSE ROGUES?
WHAT HAVE YOU COME FOR TODAY?
HE'D SUMMONED ME THERE, THE FOOL!
IF I PAY HIM A VISIT ON MY OWN VOLITION, I'M TURNED AWAY AT THE DOOR! BUT HE HAS NO PROBLEM SENDING FOR ME WHEN IT SUITS HIM!
...BUT I WAS ON MY WAY BACK FROM LORD JOHANN'S CASTLE.
OH, WELL, THAT'S PART OF IT...
MM?
RATTLE
KNOCK
WHAT'S GOING ON?
FROM THE FIRST FLOOR?
...THAT VOICE...
SNSH
YOU NEXT IN MAKING ATTACKS!
I KNOW WHAT THEY WANT! YOU'RE GOING TO PAY...
I WON'T PAY! BUT WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT NOW?
RATTLE
CRASH
YIPE!!
SNSH
OH! FRAU SCHANZGARD!
I WOULD HAVE A WORD...
...WITH GYURK...BUT FIRST, YOUR HUSBAND, MA'AM.

...I'M AGAINST THE IDEA.
I'M AFRAID...
BUT YOU'RE AS WISE AS THE OCEAN IS DEEP! WHY DON'T YOU JUST PASS ON YOUR KNOWLEDGE TO HER?
I'VE ALREADY TAUGHT HER NEARLY EVERYTHING I KNOW...
HMPH!
BUT SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO DO SO EFFECTIVELY IF SHE REMAINS AN IGNORANT NAIF.
OPPOSE IT THOUGH YOU MAY...
...AFTER I DIE, SHE WILL BECOME THE STEWARD OF THIS LAND. SHE WILL HAVE TO PROTECT IT.
CULLIVING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, ATTAINING NECESSARY POPULARITY, THESE ARE NOT THINGS THAT CAN MERELY BE PASSED DOWN FROM TEACHER TO PUPIL.
BUT THE WITS THAT ARE NEEDED TO PULL THROUGH IN TIMES OF DISTRESS...
...COME WITH EXPERIENCE, FROM LIVING THROUGH ONE'S FIRST SCENE OF CARNAGE.
I JUST THOUGHT I WOULD LET YOU KNOW.
IT SEEMS HE'S FORGOTTEN THAT HE ASCENDED THE THRONE DUE TO HIS FAMILY, NOT THROUGH ANY MERIT OF HIS OWN.
AH, WELL. THANKS TO THE VISIT, HE AGREED TO SEND OUT TROOPS AND I HAD THE CHANCE TO WARN HIM ABOUT EMS.
SQUEEZE...
I BELIEVE THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME FOR HER TO SEE THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
SO PLEASE, TAKE CARE OF MY GRAND-DAUGHTER.
I...
NO, I'M NOT.
I'M IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH HER.
WHAT'S THAT?
AH, SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE... UNDERSTOOD.
ACTUALLY, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ONE THING AS WELL.
AREN'T YOU GOING TO STOP DOROTHEA?

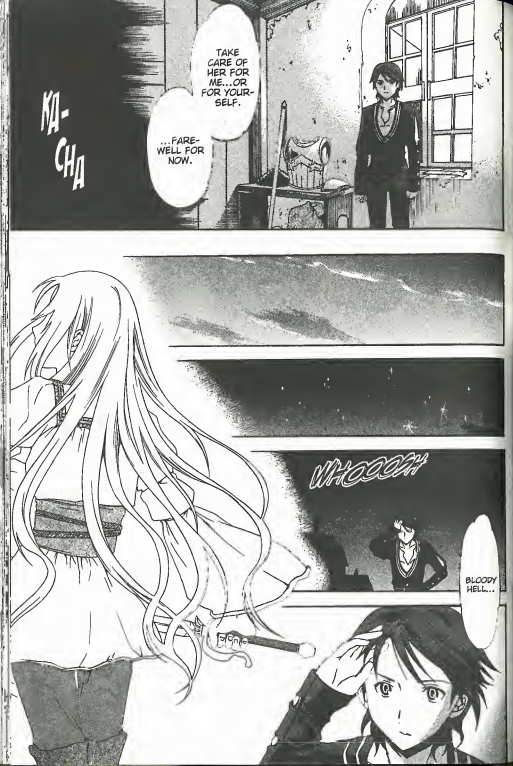
...LET ME TAKE YOUR PLACE! I CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS LAND!
OH, DON'T SPOUT NONSENSE!
IN..
IN THAT CASE...

WHY?!
THIS POSITION IS BEYOND YOU.

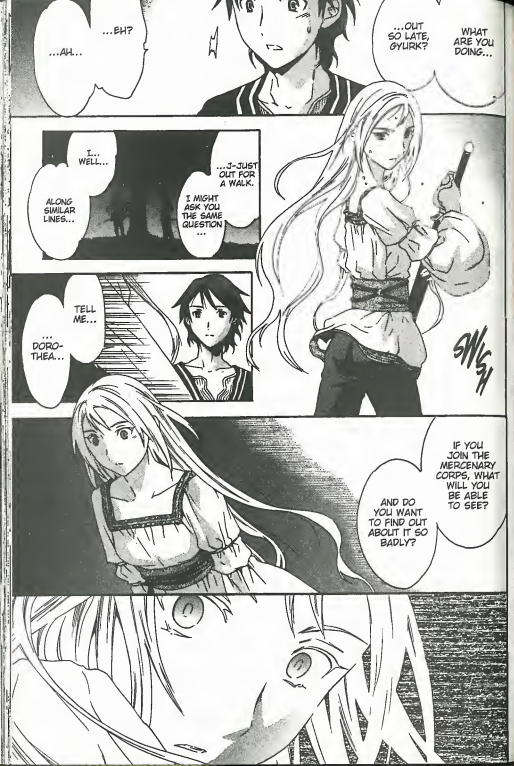
YOU DON'T HAVE THE SIGHT.
YOU MEAN RED EYES?
YOU DO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WE HAVE POWER IN OUR EYES, DON'T YOU?
.....?
THE SIGHT...?

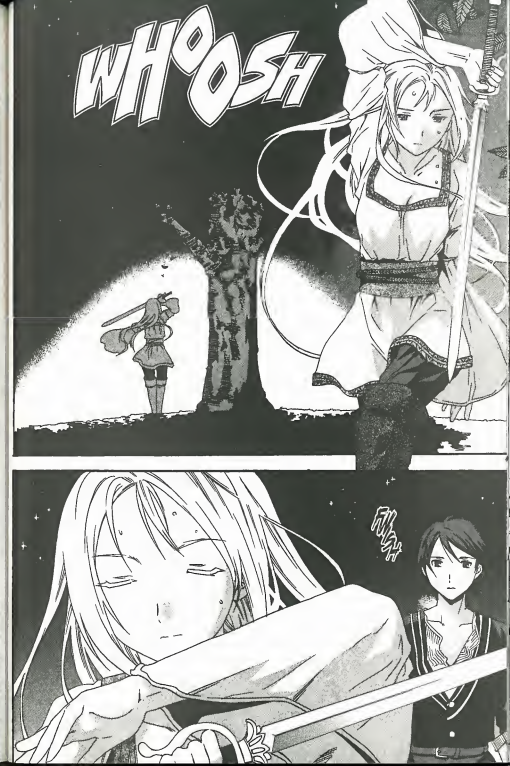
WHY MUST DOROTHEA BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FATE OF THIS LAND IN THE FIRST PLACE...?
THAT'S WHY I WANT HER TO ACCOMPANY YOU, SO THAT YOU CAN HELP HER LEARN WHAT SHE NEEDS TO KNOW.
TH- THAT'S THE REASON?
WHY, YES...
...EH?
SHE WAS BORN WITH THAT FATE..
...AND I HAVE RAISED HER TO BE FIT FOR THAT ROLE.
THEN YOU'VE JUST... "CONDITIONED" HER ALL THESE YEARS.
IMPRUDENT BOY.

I COULD NEVER TURN MY BACK ON THE CREATOR OF THIS WORLD BY PUTTING ALL MY FAITH IN BASELESS TALES!
CAN'T YOU SEE EVEN THAT MUCH?
N...
NO! HAVING OUR MINDS POISONED BY OLD SUPERSTITIONS FOR ETERNITY IS ABSURD!
I WONDER WHICH OF US HAS BEEN POISONED.
.....
DON'T YOU CARE THAT YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER WOULD BE IN A NEAR-CONSTANT STATE OF PERIL?!
THE REASON I OPPOSE HER GOING ...
...IS BECAUSE IT'S ABSOLUTELY DANGEROUS OUT THERE!!
EXCUSE ME.
AH, WELL. I HAVE NO WISH TO DEBATE THE ISSUE WITH YOU FURTHER.
WAIT A MOMENT, PLEASE !!
AND THEY CAN ACTUALIZE THAT ABILITY BY SEEING THE WORLD.
THERE'S A REASON RED-EYED HUMANS HAVE THE POTENTIAL ABILITY TO SEE INTO THE FUTURE.
SO I WILL TELL YOU ONCE AGAIN.
TAKE THE GIRL WITH YOU.
DOES IT MATTER? SUPERSTITION IS ALL IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE.
...IN THE END, IT'S ALL JUST SUPERSTITION... ISN'T IT?
B...
BUT...
CREAK
TWITCH

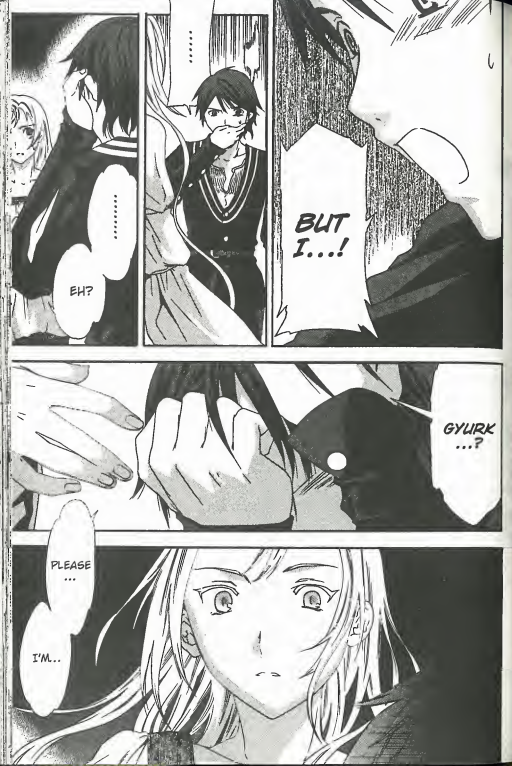

KA-CHA
TAKE CARE OF HER FOR ME...OR FOR YOURSELF.
...FAREWELL FOR NOW.
WHOOOH!
BLOODY HELL...
SCRAPE

IF YOU TRULY VALUE DOROTHEA, YOU WOULDN'T DARE EXPOSE HER TO DANGER!
YOU KNOW HOW FRAIL HER BODY IS!
THAT'S WHY I...
THAT'S NOT YOUR ONLY REASON, IS IT?
KA-CHA
IF YOU VALUE HER...
...KEEP HER BY YOUR SIDE. PROTECT HER.
...OR IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I'VE OVERESTIMATED YOU?
GYURK...


...EH?
...AH...
...OUT SO LATE, GYURK?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING...
I... WELL...
...J-JUST OUT FOR A WALK.
I MIGHT ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION ...
ALONG SIMILAR LINES...
TELL ME...
...DORO-THEA...
SWISH
IF YOU JOIN THE MERCENARY CORPS, WHAT WILL YOU BE ABLE TO SEE?
AND DO YOU WANT TO FIND OUT ABOUT IT SO BADLY?

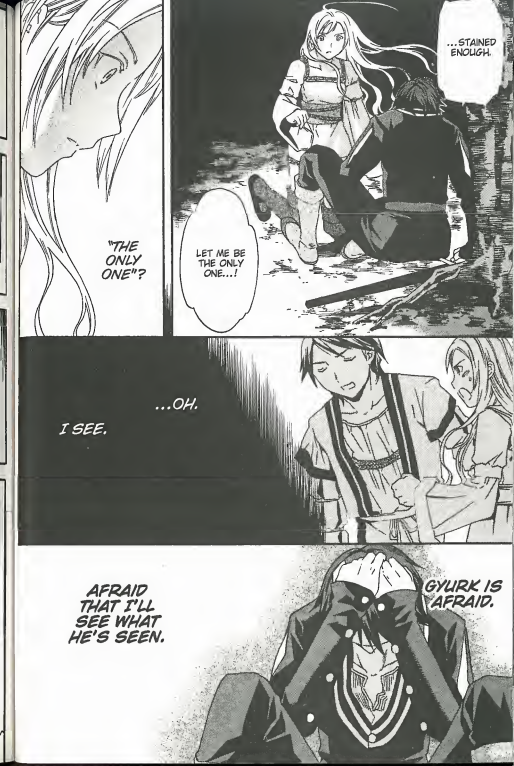

WHOOSH
FUSH

...GYURK...?
CAN YOU ENDURE THAT?!
THE ONLY TIME THEY'RE DECENT IS WHEN THE LEADER FEEDS A LINE TO DRAW NEW RECRUITS IN!
I DON'T KNOW...
MEANWHILE, HOW LONG WILL YOU BE GONE THIS TIME?
THREE YEARS? FIVE?
TEN YEARS?!
THIS VILLAGE IS ALL I KNOW OF THE WORLD.
AND NOW, WHEN IT'S IN DANGER, YOU WISH ME TO MERELY WAIT AND DO NOTHING?
THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, THE THUGS YOU BRANDED "BANDITS"...
...THEY'RE MERCENARY SOLDIERS, SAME AS ME.
!
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE...
CAN YOU WITHSTAND SWITCHING SIDES, FROM THOSE WHO ARE BEING STOLEN FROM TO THOSE WHO DO THE STEALING?
EH...?
AYYYY...!!
IN THEIR RAIDS ON VILLAGES, THEY PLUNDER, RAPE, COMMIT ATROCITIES...
...AND YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN THEM?!
AYE, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE...
...BUT IT IS TRUE.
"FOR WE ARE THE LANDSKNECHTE, MERCENARY SOLDIERS FAMED FOR OUR VALOR AND FORTITUDE!!"


.....
BUT I...!
.....
EH?
GYURK ...?
PLEASE ...
I'M..

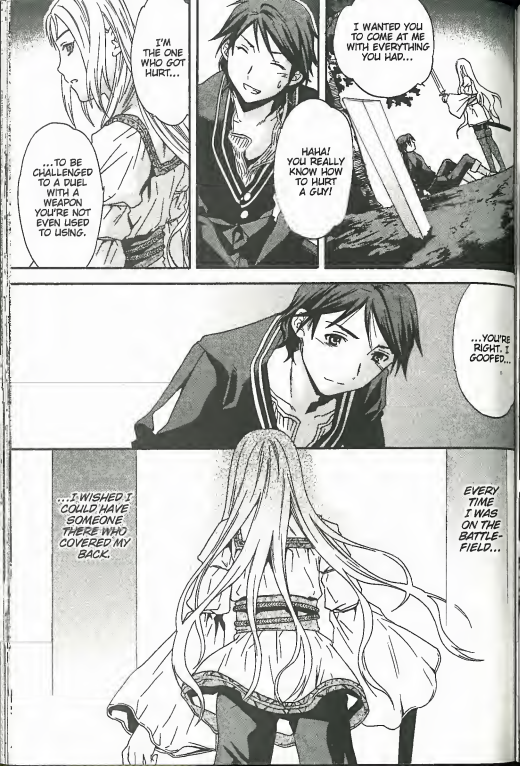
I LOVE THIS VILLAGE.
I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT WHAT LIES OUTSIDE ITS BORDERS.
BUT IN ORDER TO PROTECT WHAT I SHOULD BE PROTECTING RIGHT NOW...
...I'M GOING TO GO WITH YOU.
WHY CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND ...?
I'M TRYING TO PROTECT YOU... YOU AND ELSE! YOU NEEDN'T DO ANYTHING!
FOR BETTER OR WORSE, YOU STAND OUT!
IF YOU WERE BRANDED A WITCH...
THEY CAN CALL ME WHAT THEY LIKE!
I WOULDN'T MIND BEING ACCUSED OF BEING A WITCH, IF IT COULD MEAN SAVING THE VILLAGE...
ONLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE TREATMENT GIVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE LABELED "WITCH"!!
I'M NOT AFRAID !!

...JUST HOW HORRIBLE IT MAY BE...
I CAN'T GUESS...
LOOK INTO MY EYES.
...GYURK.
...BUT...
LOOK AT ME!!
...I STILL...
...IF YOU'RE EVER INJURED OR FALLEN IN BATTLE!
THE THING I'M MOST AFRAID OF, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...
...IS NOT BEING WITH YOU...

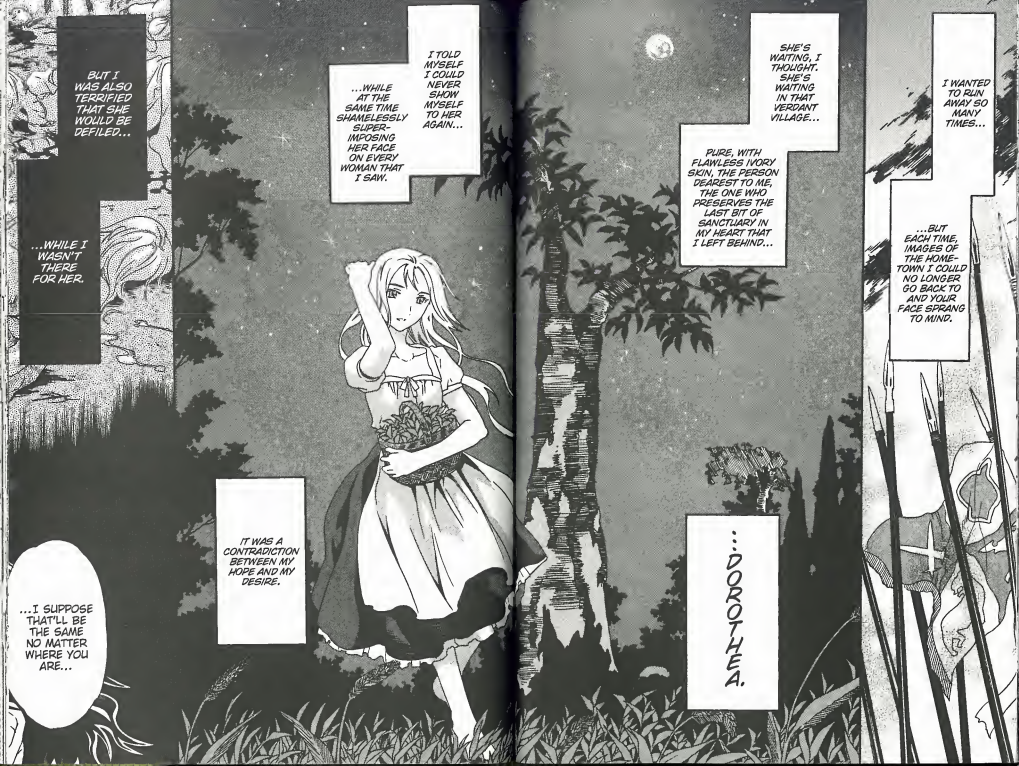

"THE ONLY ONE"?
...STAINED ENOUGH.
LET ME BE THE ONLY ONE...!
...OH.
I SEE.
AFRAID THAT I'LL SEE WHAT HE'S SEEN.
GYURK IS AFRAID.

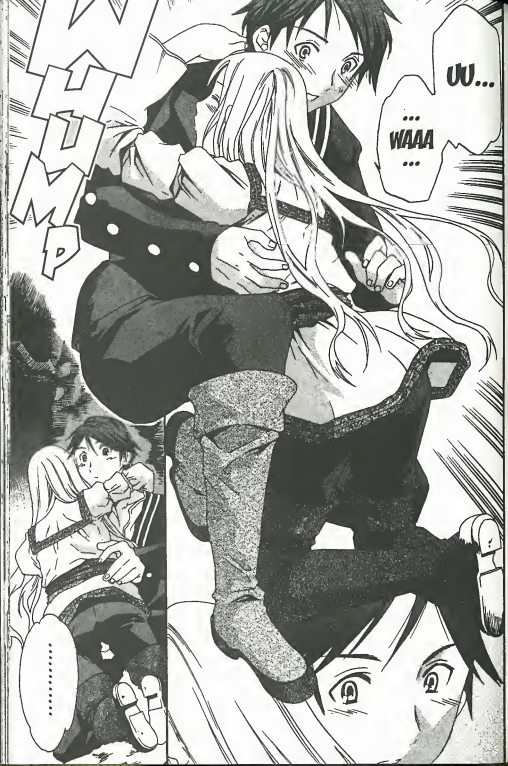
WHERE DOES THAT CALM SMILE COME FROM?
FWISH
SWAAA...
O-HO.
THEN ALL I NEED DO TO GAIN YOUR APPROVAL IS BEST YOU?
...THAT I WAS TWO YEARS AGO.
DON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING I'M THE SAME PERSON...

...I'M BEGGING YOU, GYURK...
...TRUST IN ME!
SO FOR THAT DAY, WHEN THE THREE OF US WILL BE ABLE TO BE FRIENDS OPENLY...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO MEET WITH THE PRINCESS ANYTIME WE LIKE.
IF THE TENSION WITH EMS IS EVER RESOLVED...
DORO-THEA...!
VERY WELL.
GYU
...
...FIGHT ME, DOROTHEA.
IT SEEMS THAT YOU HAVE BOUNTIFUL CONFIDENCE IN YOUR OWN SWORDS-MANSHIP...
...SO I WANT TO VERIFY FOR MYSELF THAT IT'S NOT JUST OVER-CONFIDENCE.
BUT BEFORE I DO THAT...

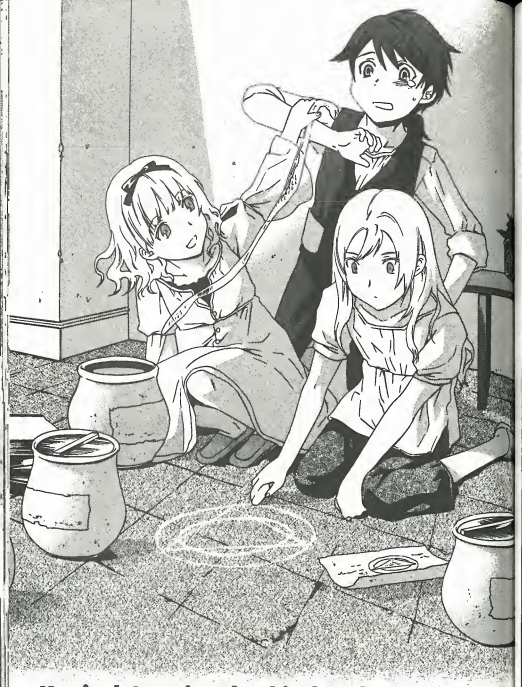

I'M THE ONE WHO GOT HURT...
...TO BE CHALLENGED TO A DUEL WITH A WEAPON YOU'RE NOT EVEN USED TO USING.
I WANTED YOU TO COME AT ME WITH EVERYTHING YOU HAD...
HAHA! YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO HURT A GUY!
...YOU'RE RIGHT, I GOOFED...
...I WISHED I COULD HAVE SOMEONE THERE WHO COVERED MY BACK.
EVERY TIME I WAS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD...

KA CHA
AK
!
.....
PATHETIC.


BUT I WAS ALSO TERRIFIED THAT SHE WOULD BE DEFILED...
...WHILE I WASN'T THERE FOR HER.
...I SUPPOSE THAT'LL BE THE SAME NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE...
IT WAS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN MY HOPE AND MY DESIRE.
...WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SHAMELESSLY SUPER-IMPOSING HER FACE ON EVERY WOMAN THAT I SAW.
I TOLD MYSELF I COULD NEVER SHOW MYSELF TO HER AGAIN...
...DOROTHEA.
PURE, WITH FLAWLESS IVORY SKIN, THE PERSON DEAREST TO ME, THE ONE WHO PRESERVES THE LAST BIT OF SANCTUARY IN MY HEART THAT I LEFT BEHIND...
SHE'S WAITING, I THOUGHT. SHE'S WAITING IN THAT VERDANT VILLAGE...
I WANTED TO RUN AWAY SO MANY TIMES...
...BUT EACH TIME, IMAGES OF THE HOME-TOWN I COULD NO LONGER GO BACK TO AND YOUR FACE SPRANG TO MIND.

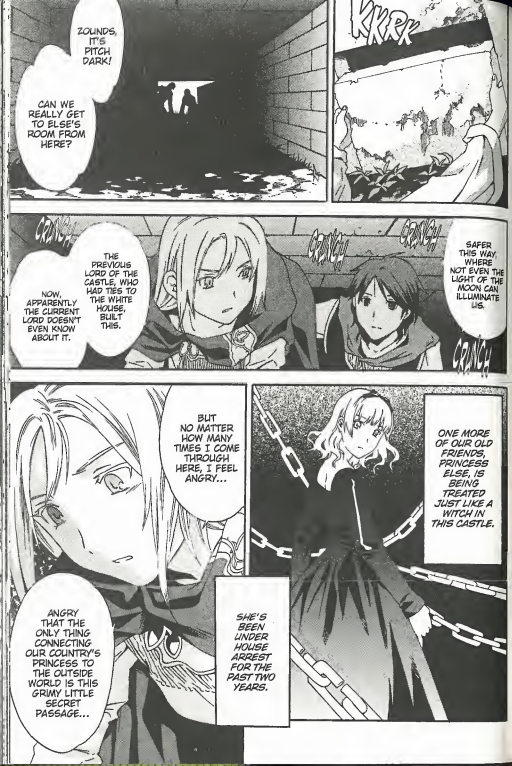

WHUMP
UU...
...
WAAA
...
.....

ALL RIGHT.
...COME WITH ME, DOROTHEA.
YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE A HUGE ASSET TO THE MERCENARY CORPS.
THEN THAT SETTLES IT.
...EH?
MY LAST PRETEXT FOR NOT TAKING YOU WITH ME HAS DISAPPEARED.
GYURK ...!



Kapitel 3 "Die Abschiedsgabe"

[Chapter 3: A Parting Gift]

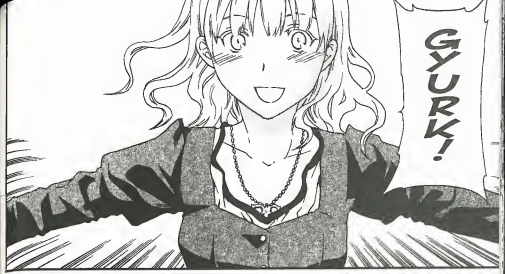

ZOUNDS, IT'S PITCH DARK!
CAN WE REALLY GET TO ELSE'S ROOM FROM HERE?
KYRK
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
NOW, APPARENTLY THE CURRENT LORD DOESN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT IT.
THE PREVIOUS LORD OF THE CASTLE, WHO HAD TIES TO THE WHITE HOUSE, BUILT THIS.
SAFER THIS WAY. WHERE NOT EVEN THE LIGHT OF THE MOON CAN ILLUMINATE US.
BUT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I COME THROUGH HERE, I FEEL ANGRY...
ONE MORE OF OUR OLD FRIENDS, PRINCESS ELSE, IS BEING TREATED JUST LIKE A WITCH IN THIS CASTLE.
ANGRY THAT THE ONLY THING CONNECTING OUR COUNTRY'S PRINCESS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS THIS GRIMY LITTLE SECRET PASSAGE...
SHE'S BEEN UNDER HOUSE ARREST FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.

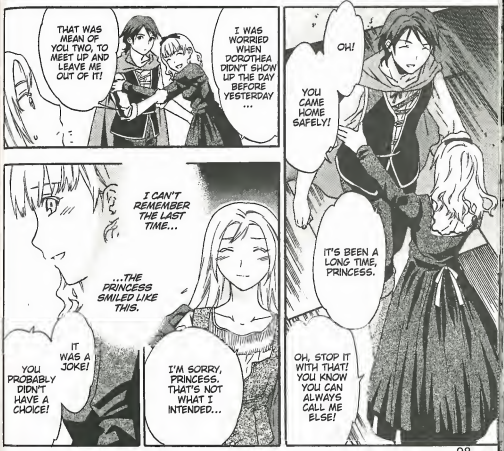
FROM THE CHURCH OF ROME'S POINT OF VIEW, THIS BELIEF IS UNMISTAKEABLY HERESY.
BEING ONE OF THE WHITE CHILDREN MYSELF...
THE REMOTE COUNTRY OF NAUDERS.
HERE, IT'S SAID THAT THE "WHITE CHILDREN" ARE BRINGERS OF GOOD FORTUNE.
THAT'S WHY, EVEN THOUGH MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND GYRUK ONLY CAME BACK HOME TO RECRUIT SOLDIERS TO PROTECT OUR COUNTRY IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS...
...IT WAS SO ROUGH FOR HIM TO ACCEPT MY APPLICATION TO JOIN THE MERCENARY ARMY.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
...I KNOW THAT ONCE I STEP FOOT OUTSIDE OF NAUDERS...
...I CAN BE ARRESTED AS A "WITCH" AT ANY TIME.
RUSTLE
HERE. THIS STONE.
WE JUST NEED TO PULL IT OUT.

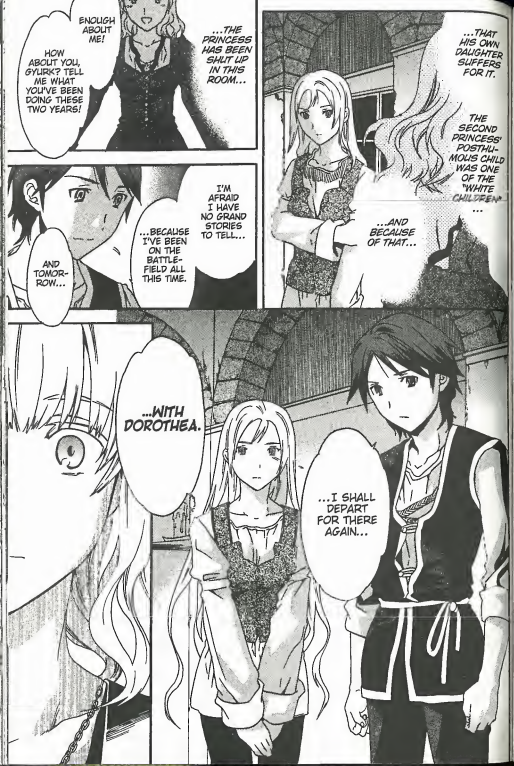
GO AHEAD.
EVEN IF YOU SLIP AND FALL ...
...THE GROUND IS SOFT MUD, SO NO WORRIES THERE.
TUC
TUC
THOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF MEETING ME TAKES HER MIND OFF HER TROUBLES...
!
I JUST DECIDED WHICH DEPARTMENT I'M GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU FOR.
MAYBE WE CAN GET ELSE TO JOIN UP TOO!
YOU'RE DEFINITELY SUITED FOR RECONNAISSANCE WORK!
GYUIRK...

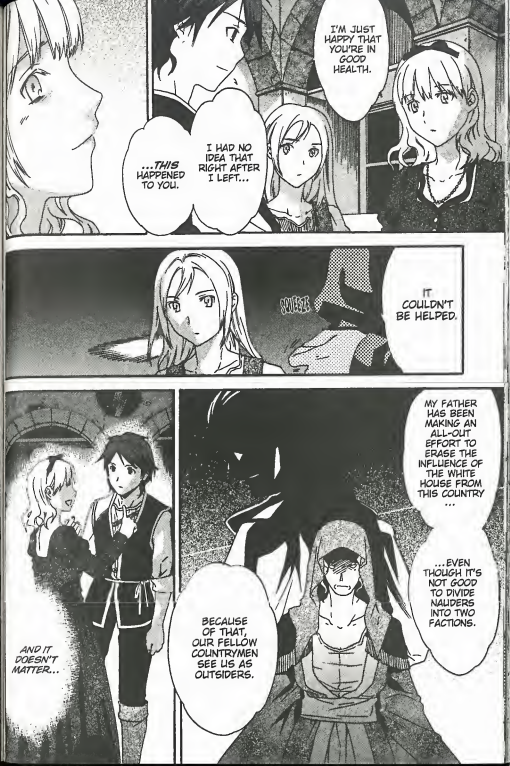
AH, WELL, TONIGHT IS OUT OF THE NORM.
I MEAN, I NEVER EXPECTED THAT I'D BE ASKING THE PRINCESS TO WRITE DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS AND KEEP THEM SECRET FROM HER FATHER.
TRUE.
I WISH THE PURPOSE OF OUR VISIT WAS ONLY SO THE THREE OF US COULD BE REUNITED, HOWEVER BRIEFLY.
DO YOU COME HERE REGULARLY, DOROTHEA?
YES.
ONE TIME, THE PRINCESS USED THIS PASSAGE TO VISIT ME AS WELL.
EH ?!
THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS THE HEM OF HER DRESS GOT SOILED...
...AND SHE HAD A DEVIL OF A TIME HIDING IT FROM THE GUARDS.
FWOOP

ANYWAY, LOOK AT YOU! HOW A BOY CHANGES IN THE SPACE OF TWO YEARS!
YOU'VE CHANGED AS WELL.
IF ONLY WE COULD GET THROUGH THIS CONVERSATION...
...WITHOUT HAVING THAT SMILE CLOUD OVER...
STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL, I'D SAY.
EH?!
REALLY? AM I PRETTY NOW?
I SUPPOSE...
BUT HE MUST HAVE HAD MANY EXPERIENCES IN PLACES WE HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA ABOUT.
I COULDN'T SAY.
IF I'D SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO HIM BEFORE, HE WOULD'VE BLUSHED AND BECOME FLUSTERED.
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO GYURK?

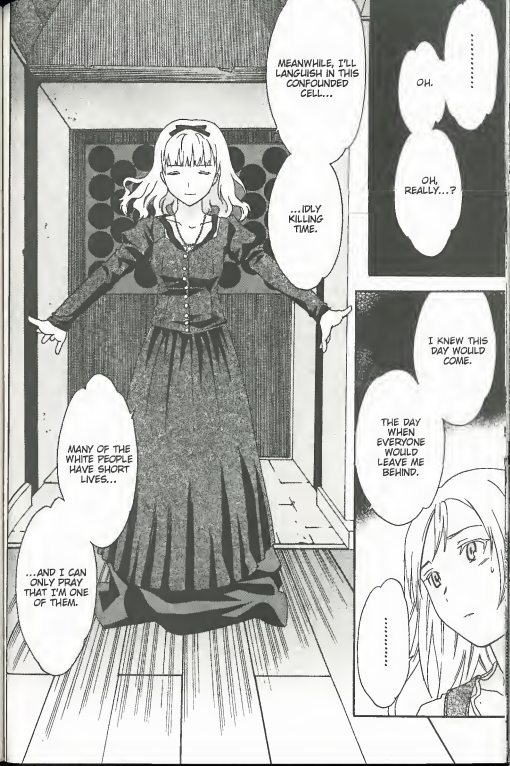

GYURK!

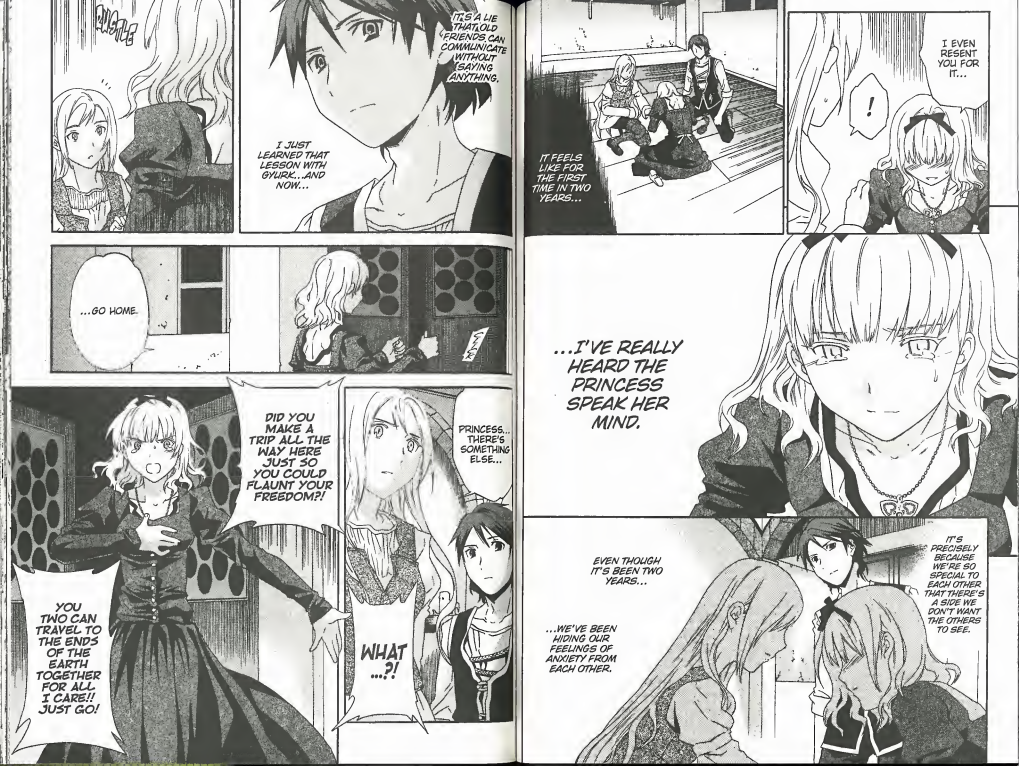

THAT WAS MEAN OF YOU TWO, TO MEET UP AND LEAVE ME OUT OF IT!
I WAS WORRIED WHEN DOROTHEA DIDN'T SHOW UP THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY...
OH!
YOU CAME HOME SAFELY!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, PRINCESS.
I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME...
...THE PRINCESS SMILED LIKE THIS.
I'M SORRY, PRINCESS. THAT'S NOT WHAT I INTENDED...
IT WAS A JOKE!
YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE!
OH, STOP IT WITH THAT! YOU KNOW YOU CAN ALWAYS CALL ME ELSE!


ENOUGH ABOUT ME!
HOW ABOUT YOU, GYURK? TELL ME WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING THESE TWO YEARS!
I'M AFRAID I HAVE NO GRAND STORIES TO TELL...
...BECAUSE I'VE BEEN ON THE BATTLE-FIELD ALL THIS TIME.
AND TOMOR-ROW...
...THE PRINCESS HAS BEEN SHUT UP IN THIS ROOM...
...THAT HIS OWN DAUGHTER SUFFERS FOR IT.
THE SECOND PRINCESS? POSTHU-MOUS CHILD WAS ONE OF THE "WHITE CHILDREN"...
...AND BECAUSE OF THAT...
...I SHALL DEPART FOR THERE AGAIN...
...WITH DOROTHEA.


I'M JUST HAPPY THAT YOU'RE IN GOOD HEALTH.
I HAD NO IDEA THAT RIGHT AFTER I LEFT...
...THIS HAPPENED TO YOU.
SQUEEZE
IT COULDN'T BE HELPED.
MY FATHER HAS BEEN MAKING AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO ERASE THE INFLUENCE OF THE WHITE HOUSE FROM THIS COUNTRY ...
...EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT GOOD TO DIVIDE NAUDERS INTO TWO FACTIONS.
BECAUSE OF THAT, OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN SEE US AS OUTSIDERS.
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER...

I KNOW!
PRIN-CESS!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...?
...IS DIS-RESPECTFUL TO THE MEMORIES OF MY MOTHER AND YOUR PARENTS
... BUT ...
THINKING LIKE THIS...
...WHAT-EVER I STUDY...
... WHEREVER I MIGHT GO...
...I'M JUST A TERRIBLY USELESS NUISANCE...
...AND I ENVY YOU TWO FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!


MEANWHILE, I'LL LANGUISH IN THIS CONFOUNDED CELL...
...IDLY KILLING TIME.
MANY OF THE WHITE PEOPLE HAVE SHORT LIVES...
...AND I CAN ONLY PRAY THAT I'M ONE OF THEM.
.....
OH.
OH, REALLY...?
I KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME.
THE DAY WHEN EVERYONE WOULD LEAVE ME BEHIND.
.....


SNIFFLE
"IT'S A LIE THAT OLD FRIENDS CAN COMMUNICATE WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING.
I JUST LEARNED THAT LESSON WITH GYURK...AND NOW...
IT FEELS LIKE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWO YEARS...
I EVEN RESENT YOU FOR IT...
!
...GO HOME.
...I'VE REALLY HEARD THE PRINCESS SPEAK HER MIND.
DID YOU MAKE A TRIP ALL THE WAY HERE JUST SO YOU COULD FLAUNT YOUR FREEDOM?!
PRINCESS... THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...
YOU TWO CAN TRAVEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH TOGETHER FOR ALL I CARE!! JUST GO!
WHAT ...?!
EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS...
...WE'VE BEEN HIDING OUR FEELINGS OF ANXIETY FROM EACH OTHER.
IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE WE'RE SO SPECIAL TO EACH OTHER THAT THERE'S A SIDE WE DON'T WANT THE OTHERS TO SEE.

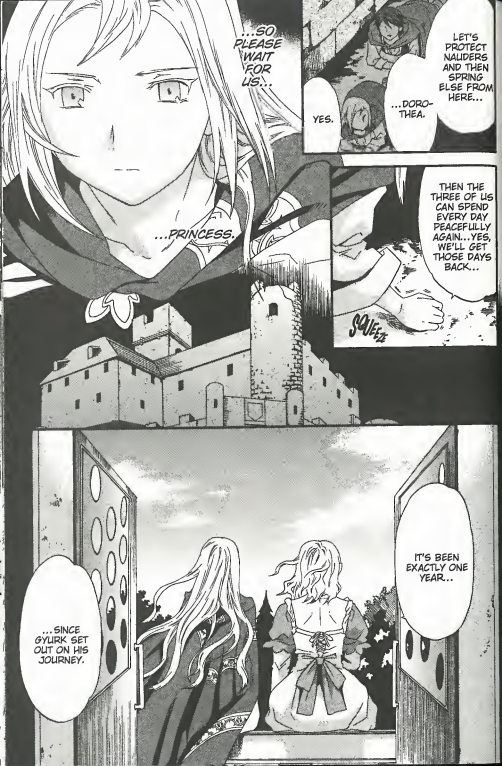
A LETTER THAT WILL PROTECT THE COUNTRY...
A LETTER THAT WILL PROTECT GYURK AND ME...
WOULD YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE DUKE OF SACHSEN?
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON IN THIS COUNTRY WHO HAS TIES TO BETTINA...
WITHOUT SUPPORT FROM SACHSEN'S HOUSE OF BETTINA, WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING THIS WAR.
...AND ALL OF OUR HOPES RIDE ON HER.

...PRIN-CESS.
I DON'T WANT TO SAY ANY MORE HORRIBLE THINGS TO YOU...
PLEASE...; LEAVE...
...WE CAN ASK A CERTAIN FAVOR OF.
WE'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON...
WE HAVEN'T JUST COME HERE TO SAY FAREWELL.

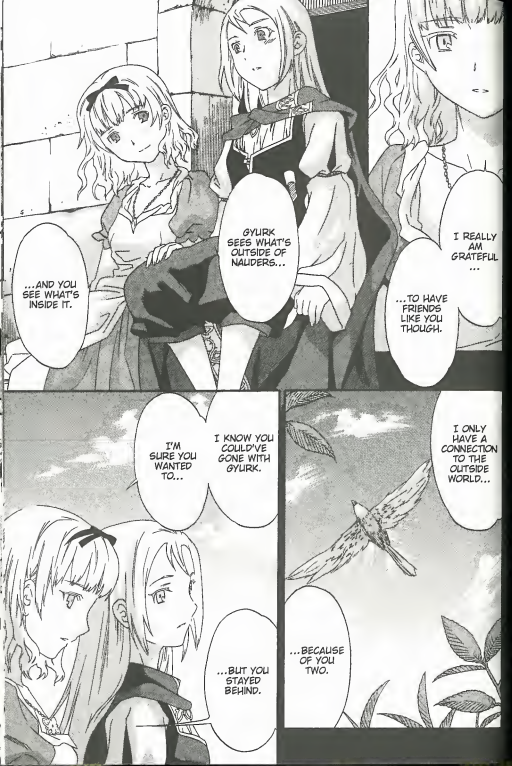
AS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY THAT GOVERNS THIS LAND...
...CAN YOU SEE THE BIG PICTURE?
DO YOU HAVE THE "SIGHT"...
...OR ARE YOU BLIND?
WELL...
...ELSE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THAT FAR...!
I BEAR THAT RESPONSIBILITY ...
YOU'RE RIGHT...
GUILT...
...I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
BUT...
PRINCESS, AFTER HOW CRUELLY YOU'VE BEEN TREATED ...
STILL, HE'S MY BLOOD RELATION.
WHATEVER HAPPENS, AT THIS RATE, IF THE COUNTRY GETS INVADED...
...EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY WILL BE RUINED.
...YOU'RE TELLING ME TO BETRAY MY FATHER?
WELL, IT'S TRUE!
GYURK!

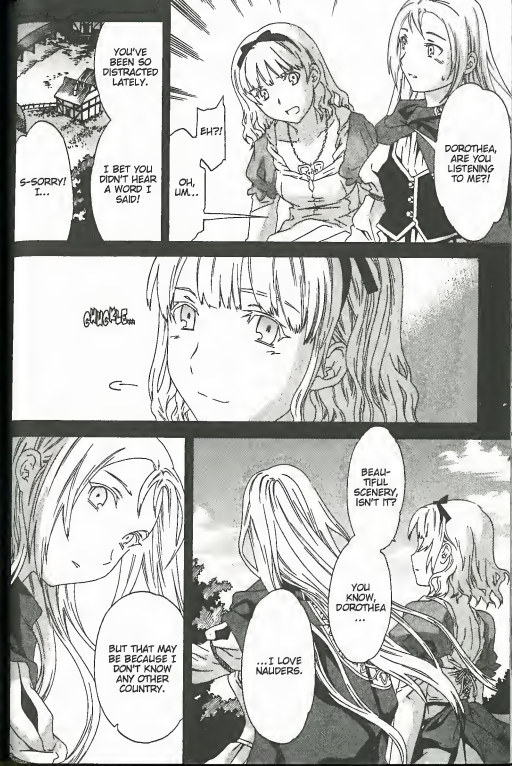
WE'RE OLD FRIENDS.
THERE'S MUCH I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
...BUT I HAVE FAITH...
...THAT THERE'S A LOT I DO UNDER-STAND.
AS I FLOUNDERED, UNABLE TO COMPLETE MY OWN APPOINTED MISSION...
...I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK OF THE PRINCESS IN HER TOWER, UTTERING THE WORD "RESPONSIBILITY" TWICE...
ONCE JUST NOW, AND ONCE A YEAR AGO...

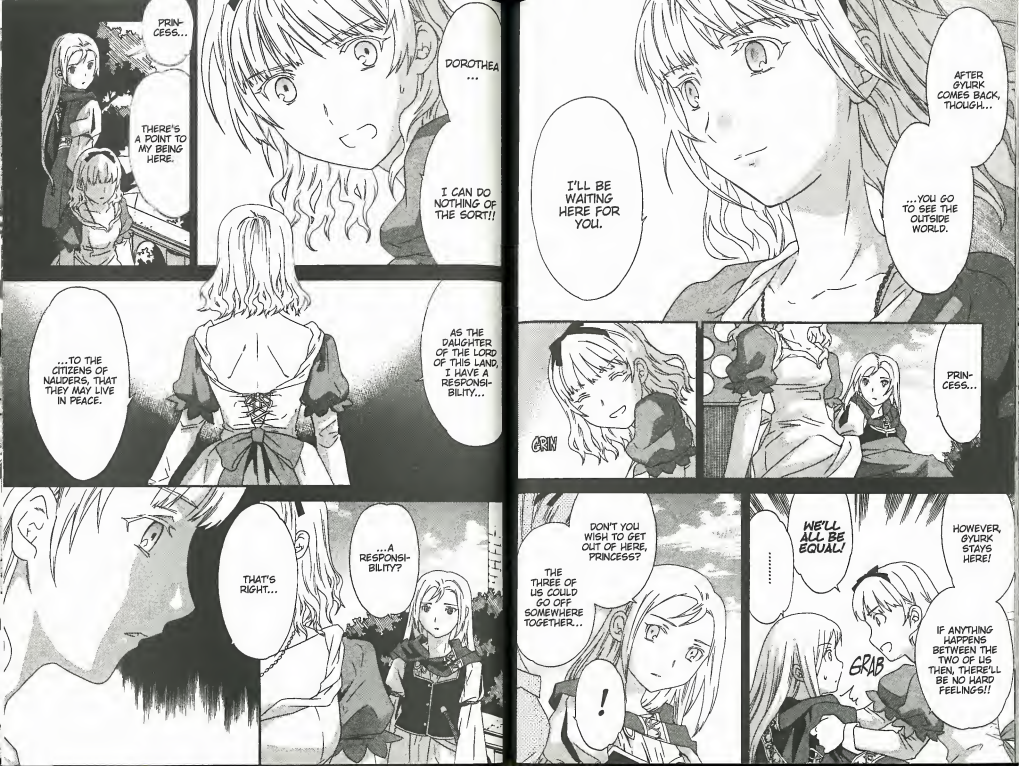
!
BUT...LET ME THINK IT OVER FOR ONE NIGHT.
WAIT! IN THAT CASE, PRINCESS, I'LL VISIT YOU ONCE MORE AT DAWN...
ELSE, I'M SORRY...
THANK YOU, DORO-THEA...
...BUT THAT'S NOT NECES-SARY.
WE JUST DON'T HAVE TIME. WE'RE DEPARTING TOMORROW MORNING.
...I KNOW.
I'M SORRY I ALWAYS MADE YOU VISIT ME, DOROTHEA.
I THINK SOME OF IT WAS OUT OF SPITE.
I PROMISE I'LL PAY YOU TWO A VISIT BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
NOW I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE TO BE CAREFUL OF GETTING THE HEM OF MY SKIRT DIRTY.


...SO PLEASE WAIT FOR US..
...PRINCESS.
LET'S PROTECT NAUDERS AND THEN SPRING ELSE FROM HERE...
...DORO-THEA.
YES.
THEN THE THREE OF US CAN SPEND EVERY DAY PEACEFULLY AGAIN...YES, WE'LL GET THOSE DAYS BACK...
SQUEEZE
IT'S BEEN EXACTLY ONE YEAR...
...SINCE GYURK SET OUT ON HIS JOURNEY.

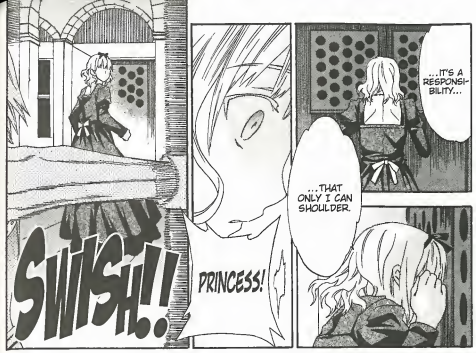
...THE PRINCESS IS ALWAYS BRAVE, SO I DIDN'T NOTICE.
I'M EQUALLY TO BLAME.
OR MAYBE I DIDN'T WANT TO NOTICE...
...HOW TORMENTED SHE FEELS.
...AND BROKE MY PROMISE TO COME BACK.
AFTER ALL, I LEFT MY TWO BEST FRIENDS BEHIND...
JUST KIDDING.
WHAT?!
AND WE'RE BOTH FED UP WITH YOU!
THAT'S RIGHT!
COME ON, WE'D BETTER HURRY.
THUMP THUMP THUMP
THUMP
.....

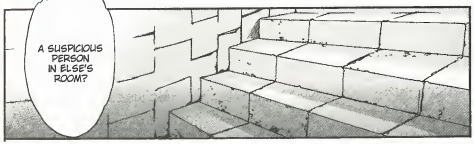

...AND YOU SEE WHAT'S INSIDE IT.
GYLIRK SEES WHAT'S OUTSIDE OF NAUDERS...
I REALLY AM GRATEFUL ...
...TO HAVE FRIENDS LIKE YOU THOUGH.
I'M SURE YOU WANTED TO...
I KNOW YOU COULDN'VE GONE WITH GYLIRK.
...BUT YOU STAYED BEHIND.
I ONLY HAVE A CONNECTION TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD...
...BECAUSE OF YOU TWO.

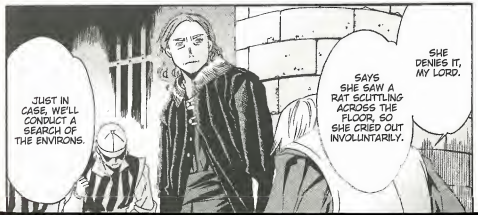

YOU'VE BEEN SO DISTRACTED LATELY.
S-SORRY! I...
I BET YOU DIDN'T HEAR A WORD I SAID!
EH?!
OH, UM..
DOROTHEA, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!
GYLIRK
BUT THAT MAY BE BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW ANY OTHER COUNTRY.
BEAU-TIFUL SCENERY, ISN'T IT?
YOU KNOW, DOROTHEA ...
...I LOVE NAUDERS.


PRIN-CESS...
THERE'S A POINT TO MY BEING HERE.
DOROTHEA...
I CAN DO NOTHING OF THE SORT!!
AS THE DAUGHTER OF THE LORD OF THIS LAND, I HAVE A RESPONSI-BILITY...
...TO THE CITIZENS OF NAUDERS, THAT THEY MAY LIVE IN PEACE.
...A RESPONSI-BILITY?
THAT'S RIGHT...
AFTER GYURK COMES BACK, THOUGH...
...YOU GO TO SEE THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
I'LL BE WAITING HERE FOR YOU.
GRIN
PRIN-CESS...
DON'T YOU WISH TO GET OUT OF HERE, PRINCESS?
THE THREE OF US COULD GO OFF SOMEWHERE TOGETHER...
!
WE'LL ALL BE EQUAL!
.....
HOWEVER, GYURK STAYS HERE!
GRAB
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS BETWEEN THE TWO OF US THEN, THERE'LL BE NO HARD FEELINGS!!

...THOROUGHLY.
THEIR REPRODUCTIVE POWER CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.
...I'LL DRIVE THEM ALL OUT...
EVENTUALLY, AFTER I FINISH USING THEM AS PAWNS TO SERVE MY COUNTRY...
CURSED HEATHENS!
HEH. A RAT, EH?
I WONDER IF IT WAS BROWN OR WHITE...
SQUEAK
A VEXATIOUS PROBLEM INDEED.
JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN THE LAST OF THEM, MORE POP OUT OF THE WOMB.


SWISH!!
PRINCESS!
...IT'S A RESPONSIBILITY...
...THAT ONLY I CAN SHOULDER.

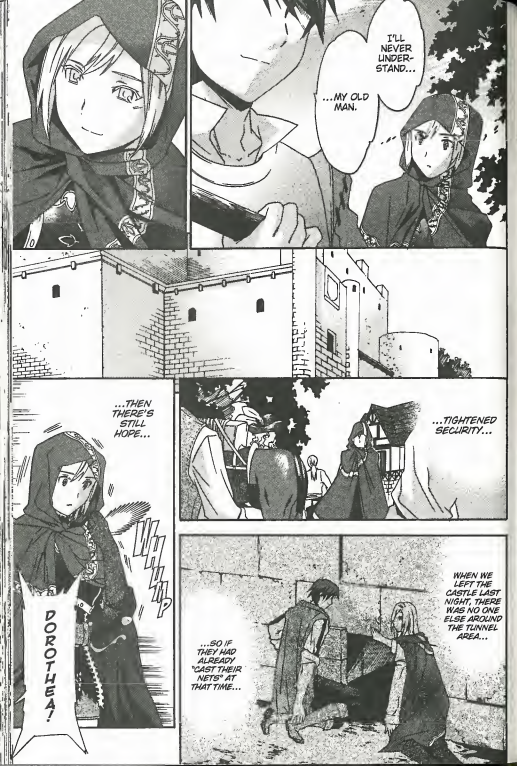

A SUSPICIOUS PERSON IN ELSE'S ROOM?


JUST IN CASE, WE'LL CONDUCT A SEARCH OF THE ENVIRONS.
SAYS SHE SAW A RAT SCUTTLING ACROSS THE FLOOR, SO SHE CRIED OUT INVOLUNTARILY.
SHE DENIES IT, MY LORD.

IT SEEMS SHE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET OUT YET.
I WONDER IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED...
WHAT DID SHE SAY, DOROTHEA?!
OH, WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING?
I'M GOING TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU FROM NOW AFTER ALL...
WHAT? DON'T TELL ME YOU WERE GOING TO LET ELSE SEE YOU OFF?
YOU JUST SAW HER LAST NIGHT, DID YOU NOT?
YES, BUT... SHE STILL HASN'T SAID WHETHER SHE'LL WRITE THE LETTER.
...BUT I'LL BE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE PRINCESS AS WELL.
IF SHE CAN'T COME, OF COURSE OUR PLANS WITH THE LETTER ARE UP IN SMOKE...
I WISH I HAD VISITED HER THIS MORNING.
I'M JOKING, I'M JOKING!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAYS MEAN THINGS.
YOU DON'T SUPPOSE SHE WOULD LET US WAIT LIKE THIS ON PURPOSE, JUST TO BE A LITTLE MEAN, KNOWING WE'D BE NERVOUS?

BUZZ
GOOD JOB ACTING IS THIS OF BATTLE?
RIGHT, INN-KEEPER?!
YOU'LL HAVE NO TROUBLE FILLING THE RANKS NOW, THAT'S FOR SURE.
.....
A SPECTACLE, IS IT NOT? EXPERIENCED MERCENARIES TO THE LAST MAN.
OH MY...
RIGHT NOW, GERMANY IS CRAWLING WITH FELLOWS LIKE THESE.
GRAND-MAMA!
GYURK!
...ALL I CAN SAY IS YOU IMPRESS ME AS ALWAYS.
THE OLD WOMAN IS SLY AS A FOX...
THEY'RE NOT SOLDIERS OF A REGULAR ARMY, BUT I THINK THEY'LL FIGHT WELL FOR NAUDERS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, GYURK?

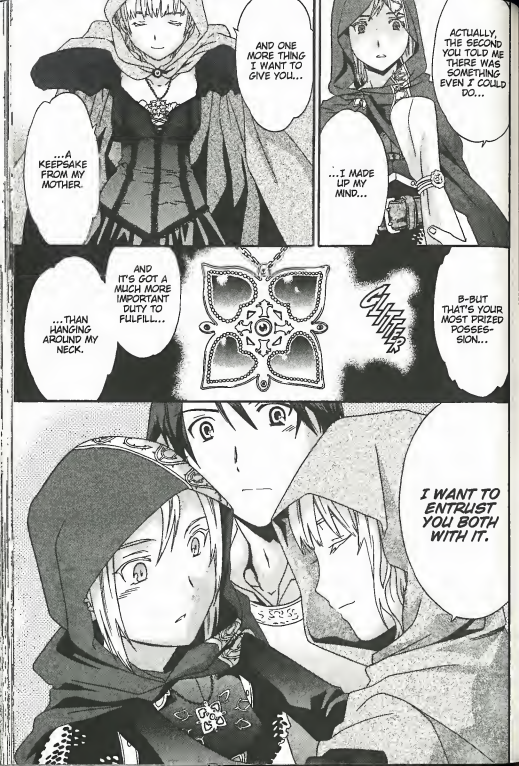
THEY'RE SEARCHING THE CASTLE?!
EH?
THEY'VE BEEN MAINTAINING TIGHT SECURITY SINCE LAST NIGHT.
WELL, YOU DID AN EXCELLENT JOB SLIPPING THROUGH THEIR NET.
.....
THAT'S RIGHT. SO YOU TWO ARE THE SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS THEY'RE LOOKING FOR.
W-WHAT? THIS IS YOUR...
PARTING GIFT. I'M GIVING IT TO YOU.
BUT I'M SURE YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PALACE GUARDS NOW.
FWISH
ONE MORE THING... TAKE IT, GYURK.
SPIN
GRAB
I TRUST IN ELSE TOO, YOU KNOW!
ON THE DAY OF YOUR DEPARTURE, IT'S THE LEAST YOU COULD DO TO STOP AVOIDING YOUR OWN FATHER!
SQUEEZE
OH, DON'T GIVE ME THAT MALARKEY!
HEY... WHAT ARE YOU DOING, DOROTHEA?!
SQUEEZE
HOLD, DOROTHEA.
MY WORDS ARE FOR YOUR EARS AS WELL.
AH!
WAIT...
WELL, I'M GOING TO KEEP LOOKING FOR THE PRINCESS.


I'LL NEVER UNDER-STAND...
...MY OLD MAN.
...THEN THERE'S STILL HOPE...
DOROTHEA!
...TIGHTENED SECURITY...
WHEN WE LEFT THE CASTLE LAST NIGHT, THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND THE TUNNEL AREA...
...SO IF THEY HAD ALREADY "CAST THEIR NETS" AT THAT TIME...

WELL...
TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELVES.
I...
I SWEAR ...
...I'LL GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU UPON MY RETURN!
F...
FATHER!
...IS THAT YOU STAY SAFE.
ALL I ASK...
...IS THAT SO?
DO AS YOU LIKE, DISOBEDIENT CHILD!

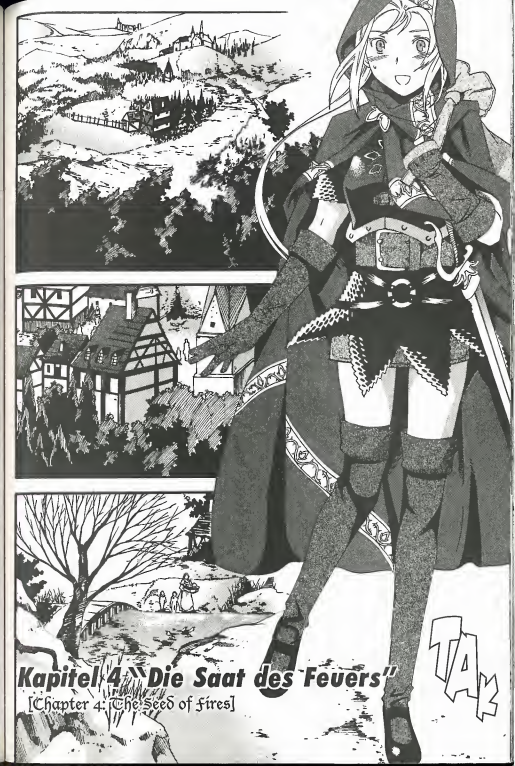
...THE PRINCESS...
BUT...
DOROTHEA...
IT'S TIME...
GRANDMA!
YOU'RE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A LONG JOURNEY.
YOU DON'T WANT TO GET LEFT BEHIND, DO YOU?
.....
...PRINCESS...
...WAIT!
NOT LIKE THAT...
I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE HER...

...BE WELL TOO.
YOU CHILDREN ...
WERE YOU THINKING OF TAKING OFF WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING TO US?
CHILDREN ...
WHERE ARE YOU HEADING? AREN'T YOU LEAVING THE VILLAGE TODAY?!
PROMISE US!
AND AS HEALTHY AS YOU ARE NOW!
YOU BETTER COME BACK TO US!
EGLAIN


AND ONE MORE THING I WANT TO GIVE YOU...
ACTUALLY, THE SECOND YOU TOLD ME THERE WAS SOMETHING EVEN I COULD DO...
...A KEEPSAKE FROM MY MOTHER.
...I MADE UP MY MIND...
AND IT'S GOT A MUCH MORE IMPORTANT DUTY TO FULFILL...
B-BUT THAT'S YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION...
...THAN HANGING AROUND MY NECK.
GLITTER
I WANT TO ENTRUST YOU BOTH WITH IT.
PRINCESS...!
.....!
...BUT NOW I'M THE SLOWCOACH.
I USED TO BE THE BEST RUNNER OF THE THREE OF US...
ELSE...!

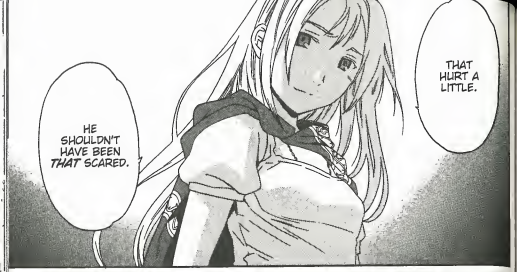
DORO-THEA!
YOU'RE WALKING A LITTLE TOO FAST!
I'M FINE!
NICE DAY LIKE THIS, THERE'S NO REASON TO PICK UP THE PACE. YOU'RE GOING TO WEAR YOURSELF OUT!
SIGH!

IT WILL HELP YOU ACCOMPLISH...
...WHAT ONLY THE TWO OF YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH.
MEAN-WHILE, I'LL BE HERE WAITING FOR YOU... BELIEVING IN YOU...
...SO...
...PLEASE-...
...STAY SAFE...


Kapitel 4: "Die Saat des Feuers"
[Chapter 4: The Seed of Fires]
TAK

SWISH
AAAH!!
CHK!
I DIDN'T SEE A THING...
...IF YOU FLEE NOW!
...AHH...
ULP...

DROP THAT BAG AND DISAPPEAR, THIEF.
YOU WON'T MAKE OFF WITH A CRUMB FROM US.
SWISH
?!
THUNK
RRR!!

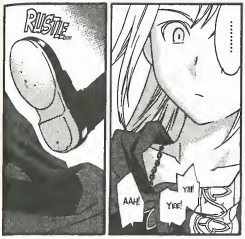

HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THAT SCARED.
THAT HURT A LITTLE.

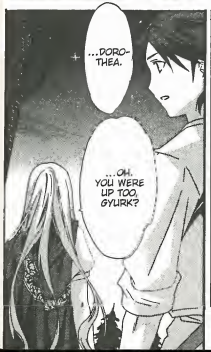
WHEN I TRAVELED THROUGH HERE LAST TIME...
...THERE WAS A BODY LYING ON THE GROUND THATAWAY. POOR FELLOW HAD BEEN STRIPPED, MURDERED AND DUMPED.
.....

AH, WELL...I'M NOT SURPRISED, IN THIS AREA.
THERE'S NO END TO THE RUMORS GOING AROUND HERE ABOUT MONSTERS LIKE THE WEREHALS AND NACHZEARER ATTACKING TRAVELERS.
NACH...?
OH, BOTH ARE TYPES OF VAMPIRES.

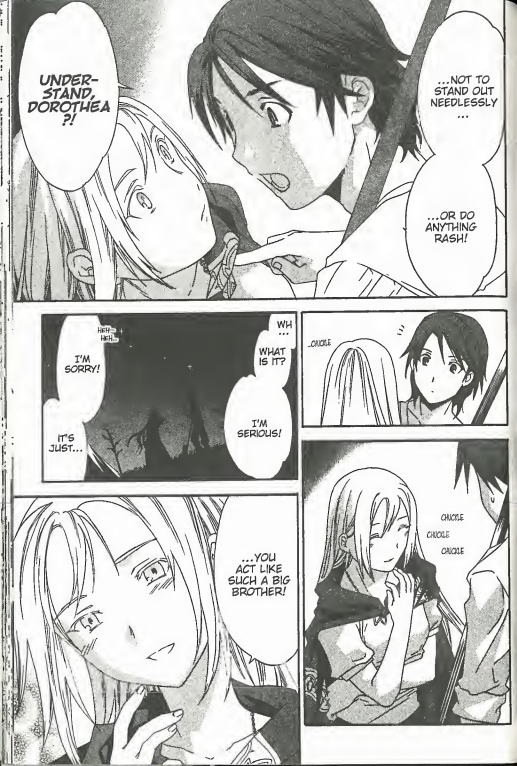
...WITH THOSE EYES!
JUST DON'T LOOK AT ME...

Y-YOU'RE...
...A WITCH!
D-DON'T LOOK AT ME! I PROMISE! I'LL NEVER STEAL AGAIN!
SWISH!

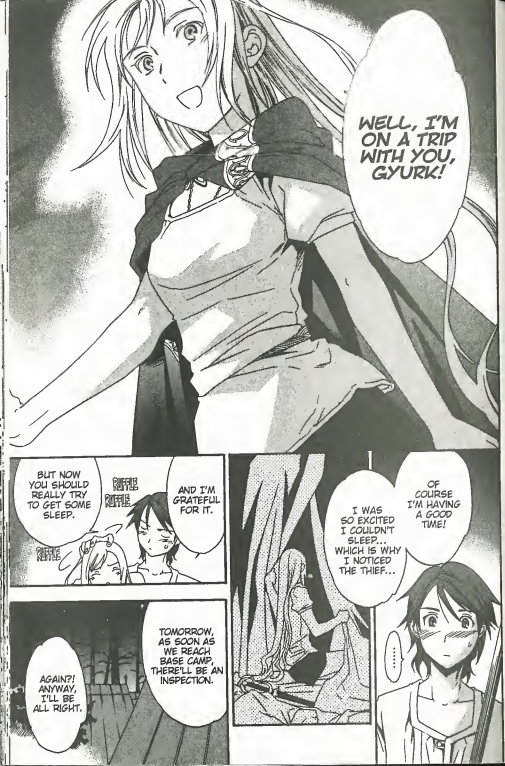

RUSH!
.....
AAH!
YIK!
YEE!

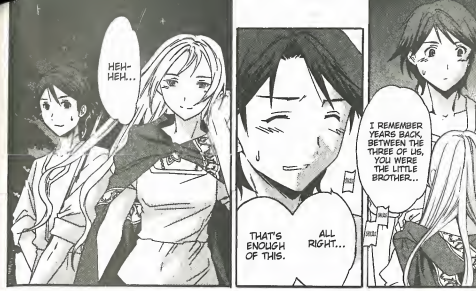

...DORO-THEA.
...OH. YOU WERE UP TOO, GYLIRK?

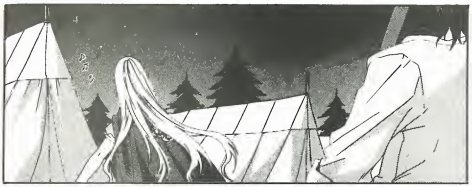
AAAAAH!
AAAH!

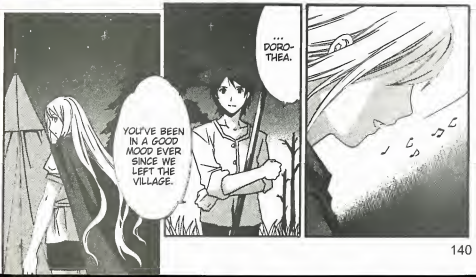

UNDER-STAND, DOROTHEA?!
...NOT TO STAND OUT NEEDLESSLY...
...OR DO ANYTHING RASH!
HAHA HA HA...
I'M SORRY!
IT'S JUST...
WH...
WHAT IS IT?
I'M SERIOUS!
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
...YOU ACT LIKE SUCH A BIG BROTHER!

NAUGHT THAT CAN BE DONE...?
BUT IF ROBBERS ARE RAMPANT, ISN'T THAT DUE TO THE LOCAL LORD'S NEGLIGENCE?
BRIGANDS OR BOGEYMEN. THERE'S NAUGHT THAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT EITHER OF THEM...
...SO THEY'RE THE SAME THING IN MY BOOK.
BY A VAMPIRE?! PREPOSTEROUS. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY DONE IN BY COMMON BRIGANDS.
MAKES YOU WONDER WHAT IT THE STATE IS FOR THOUGH.
THE WORLD'S COME TO A PRETTY PASS...
IF THERE WERE ENOUGH TROOPS LEFT OVER TO TAKE CARE OF BANDS OF THIEVES, THERE'D BE NO NEED TO HIRE US IN THE FIRST PLACE.
EVERYONE'S ALREADY GOT THEIR HANDS FULL WITH THE WAR.
THAT'S WHY I TELL YOU...
TAP!
!
...AND THE CHURCH ENCOURAGES WITCH HUNTS.
...WHEN IT'S CONVENIENT TO PLACE THE BLAME FOR EVERYTHING ON WITCHES, DEMONS AND THE LIKE AND BURN SUSPECTED CULPRITS INTO ASHES.
THE CITIZENRY SEEMS TO BE SATISFIED WITH THAT...

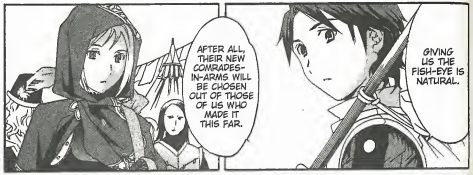

WELL, I'M ON A TRIP WITH YOU, GYURK!
BUT NOW YOU SHOULD REALLY TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP.
AND I'M GRATEFUL FOR IT.
TOMORROW, AS SOON AS WE REACH BASE CAMP, THERE'LL BE AN INSPECTION.
AGAIN?! ANYWAY, I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
I WAS SO EXCITED I COULDN'T SLEEP... WHICH IS WHY I NOTICED THE THIEF...
OF COURSE I'M HAVING A GOOD TIME!
.....

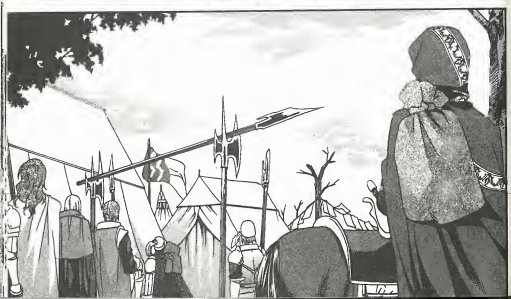

HEH-HEH...
THAT'S ENOUGH OF THIS.
ALL RIGHT...
I REMEMBER YEARS BACK, BETWEEN THE THREE OF US, YOU WERE THE LITTLE BROTHER...

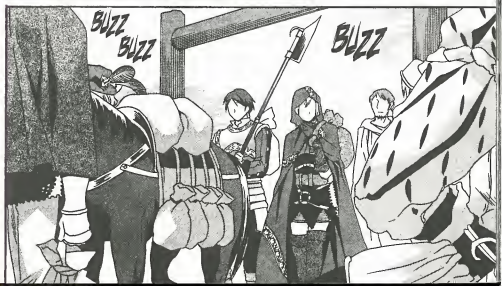



YOU'VE BEEN IN A GOOD MOOD EVER SINCE WE LEFT THE VILLAGE.
... DORO-THEA.

IT FEELS LIKE THE PEOPLE AROUND HERE ARE SHOOTING DAGGERS OUT OF THEIR EYES.
DON'T WORRY, IT'S NOT ONLY YOU THEY'RE SCOWLING AT.
EVEN THOUGH I'M WEARING A CLOAK...
THEY'RE LOOKING AT ALL OF US.


GIVING US THE FISH-EYE IS NATURAL.
AFTER ALL, THEIR NEW COMRADES-IN-ARMS WILL BE CHOSEN OUT OF THOSE OF US WHO MADE IT THIS FAR.

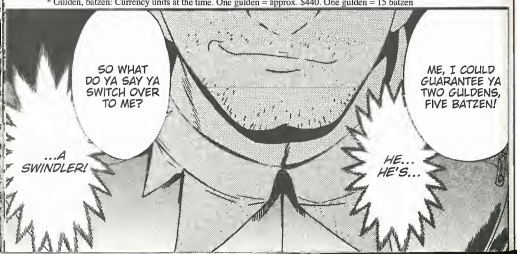


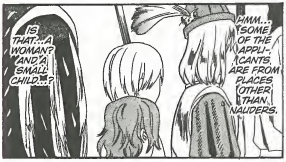

BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ

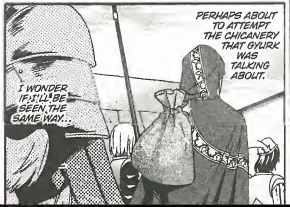
AH...
THE REGIMENTAL COMMANDER AWAITS!
COME!
AH, THEN YOU HAVE A GOOD CONNECTION!
AS IT HAPPENS, A CERTAIN ACQUAINTANCE IN MY HOMETOWN HAS SOME INFLUENCE...
IT WASN'T ME.
SWAVE
SEE YOU ANON!
...HE NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING IN THE "INNER CIRCLE."
THAT WAS A SURPRISE.

...WHERE WOMEN AND CHILDREN DISGUISE THEMSELVES AS APPLICANTS, THEN TAKE OFF AS SOON AS THEY RECEIVE THEIR CONTRACT MONEY.
RECENTLY, THERE'S BEEN A FAIR BIT OF FRAUD...
...THE DIRTY CHEATS!
THAT'S THE SPEAR GATE. THE INSPECTION IS HELD JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE.
OH...
WE STAND IN LINE HERE AND WAIT OUR TURN.
HERR FURUNTZ-BURCK!
MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW MY LEAD SO THEY DON'T SUSPECT YOU OF THE SAME SKULL-DUGGERY...
I KNEW YOU WOULD COME THROUGH FOR US!
WE'VE BEEN WAITING EAGERLY FOR YOUR RETURN!
LOOK AT ALL OF THESE VOLUNTEERS YOU'VE GATHERED.
FURUNTZ-BURCK'S OH, HE MEANS GYUBE. ...

* Gulden, batzen: Currency units at the time. One gulden = approx. $440. One gulden = 15 batzen



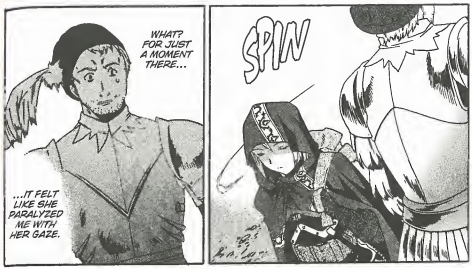




G-GRUBBY MONEY?!
...AND IT WASN'T TO GET MY HANDS ON ANY GRUBBY MONEY!
I RESOLVED TO APPLY TO BE A SOLDIER FOR MY OWN REASON...
GULP
ARE YOU RIDICULING ME, GIRL...?!

HAH?
GET LOST.
...BUT IT'LL SMOOTH OUT THOSE CURVES A' YOURS!
NOW, THE ARMOR I GOT I CAN FIX YOU UP WITH IS A MITE BIT HEAVIER ...
TAP!
AND THE ONLY WAY A WOMAN'LL GET PICKED FOR THIS MAN'S ARMY IS IF SHE'S GOT SINGULAR ABILITY!
THE FIRST THING I'D HAVE YA DO IS GET RID A' THAT ARMOR! ANYBODY CAN SEE YER A WOMAN!
I TOLD YOU TO GET LOST, CLOD.
WHA--?

...JUDGES WHETHER OR NOT TO EMPLOY EACH SOLDIER
...WHERE THE REGIMENTAL COMMANDER, THE HIGHEST LEADER IN THIS MERCENARY ARMY...
TCH!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THE INSPECTION IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!
SO THE INSPECTION ...
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
EVEN SCOUNDRELS MAKE HUNTER AS LONG AS THEY'RE COMPETENT, EH?
NO, IT IS A SHAM.
...IS LIKE A SHAM.
BUT AM I GOING TO LET THAT DAUNT ME? SHALL I TURN AROUND AND HEAD BACK TO THE VILLAGE ALONE?
NAY...NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I'M GOING UNDER THAT SPEAR!


WHAT? FOR JUST A MOMENT THERE...
...IT FELT LIKE SHE PARALYZED ME WITH HER GAZE.
SPIN

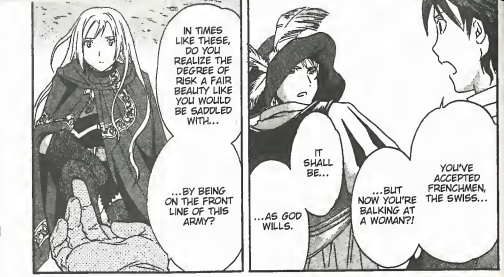
...THAT'S JUST STUPID SUPERSTITION...
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS WITCHES...
SHE COULDN'T BE...

A WOMAN WITH EYES...
...THE COLOR OF BLOOD ...
NO...

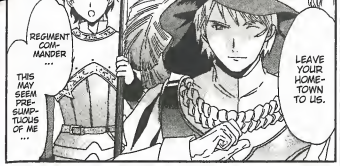
ANTON!
WAIT, YOU...
NO LITTLE GIRL MAKES ME SHAKE IN MY BOOTS!

I CAME HERE...
...WITH YOUR AIDE, GYURK FURLNTZ-BURCK...
...SO THAT YOU WOULD FULFILL YOUR PROMISE.
...HMPH.
AND ARE YOU A NALIDERS NOBLE?
I'VE COME HERE TO FULFILL A MISSION...
...AND I'M NOT PREPARED TO TURN BACK NOW.

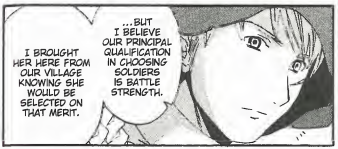
*Transport corps: The unit attached to the army that takes care of provisions, clothing, weapons, ammunition, etc.


IN TIMES LIKE THESE, DO YOU REALIZE THE DEGREE OF RISK A FAIR BEAUTY LIKE YOU WOULD BE SADDLED WITH...
...BY BEING ON THE FRONT LINE OF THIS ARMY?
IT SHALL BE...
...AS GOD WILLS.
YOU'VE ACCEPTED FRENCHMEN, THE SWISS...
...BUT NOW YOU'RE BALKING AT A WOMAN?!

BUT IF I MAY, I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOU MY DEGREE OF SWORDSMANSHIP.
I'M WELL AWARE OF THE DANGER.
!
PHEW. YOU'RE A FASCINATING WOMAN!

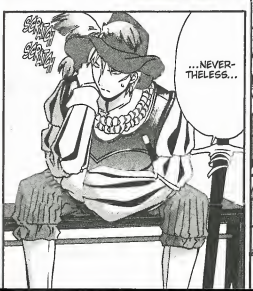

REGIMENT COMMANDER...
THIS MAY SEEM PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME...
LEAVE YOUR HOMETOWN TO US.

NO.
THEN RELAX AND GO TO THE REAR DETACHMENT.
I'LL ACCEPT THE HOUSE OF BETTINA'S PETITION. THE MATTER'S ALREADY BEEN SETTLED.


I BROUGHT HER HERE FROM OUR VILLAGE KNOWING SHE WOULD BE SELECTED ON THAT MERIT.
...BUT I BELIEVE OUR PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION IN CHOOSING SOLDIERS IS BATTLE STRENGTH.

GYURK...

I DARE SAY SHE'S ONE OF THE FOREMOST SWORD SLINGERS IN ALL OF NAUDERS.
AND SHE HAS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF A SORT AS WELL, FACING BANDITS WHO THREATENED THE VILLAGE.

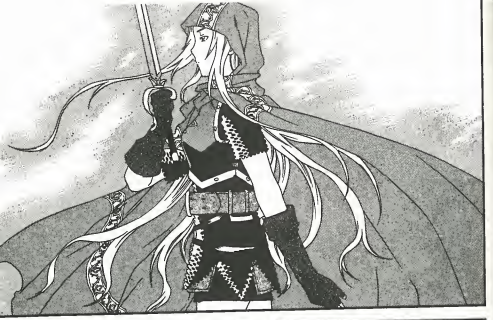

SCRATCH SCRATCH
...NEVERTHELESS...

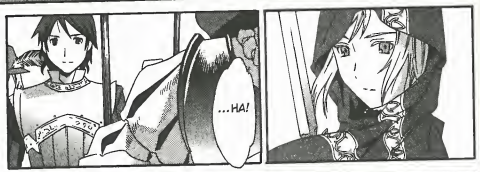
CLANG!
HEH-HEH!
LOCKIN' SWORDS AIN'T NO WAY FOR A GIRL TO BEHAVE!
TELL YA WHAT... APOLOGIZE FOR YOUR RUDENESS BEFORE, GIVE UP RIGHT NOW...
...AN' I'LL LET YOU BE MY PERSONAL CONCUBINE!
DOES HIS VULGARITY KNOW NO BOUNDS...?
EAT MY STEEL.
G-G...
GIRL!
WHA---?!
CLANG

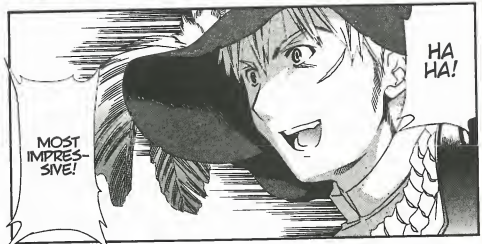
VERY WELL.
ANTON!
HAVE A BOUT WITH HER.
YES, SIR!
HAHA!
MY PLEASURE!
I'M HONORED THAT YOU CALLED UPON ME.
.....
...OI!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO STOP THIS?!
YOU'VE WRECKED POOR NEIL AGAIN! TWO!
EX-CUSE ME?
NO, NOT ESPECIALLY.
ALTHOUGH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, YES...
THERE IS ONE THING THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

SWOOSH
TRADE BLOWS WITH ME!!
STAND STILL, BLAST YA...!
Y...
YOUUU...
SHIDDER

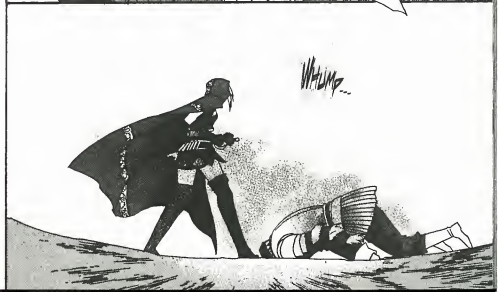
TAK
CLANG
CHAK
WHEEZ
WHICHEVER WAY, HE'S LEAVING HIMSELF WIDE OPEN.
FOOLISH.
FWOOSH
SIMPLE ATTACK... HE'S MERELY RELYING ON BRUTE STRENGTH.
EITHER HE'S UNDERESTIMATING ME OR ANGER IS MAKING HIM RECKLESS...
MM?
NOTHING.
JUST HOPE SHE DOESN'T OVERDO IT.
THIS IS EXACTLY WHY I TOLD HER...
THAT GIRL KNOWS HOW TO FIGHT!
INCREDIBLE. SHE SEES THROUGH HIS EVERY MOVE.

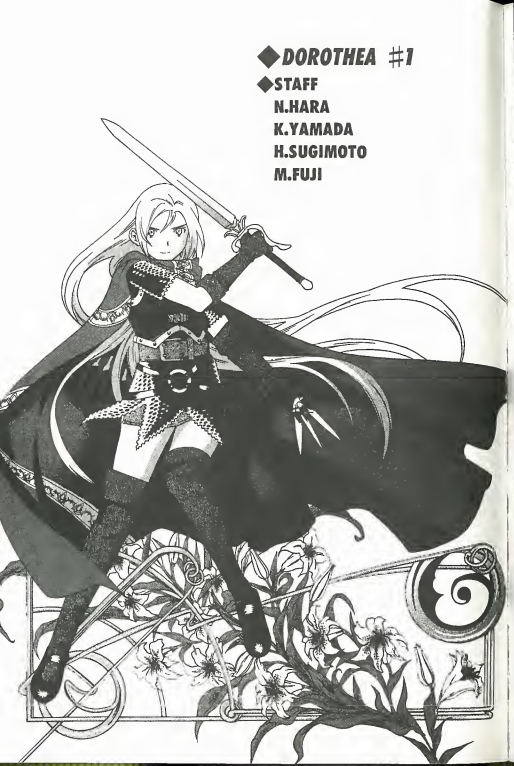



...HA!


HA HA!
MOST IMPRES-SIVE!

CLANG
URK!!


WHUMP...


◆DOROTHEA #1
◆STAFF
N.HARA
K.YAMADA
H.SUGIMOTO
M.FUJI

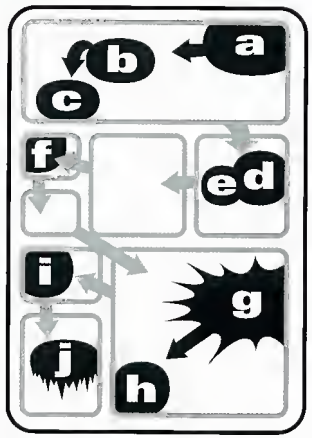
ALL RIGHT!
THE AXE?!
WELL ENOUGH.
CAN YOU WIELD THE LONG LANCE?!
YES.
BU
ZZ
DOROTHEA ESSEN-BACH...
...INFANTRY, SIX GULDENS!
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN IT WAS USE-LESS...
GRUU
...TELLING HER NOT TO STAND OUT...
UX PF!
CONTINUED IN VOLUME 2

All the pages in this book were created—and are printed here—in Japanese RIGHT-to-LEFT format. No artwork has been reversed or altered, so you can read the stories the way the creators meant for them to be read.

FLIP IT!

RIGHT TO LEFT?!

Traditional Japanese manga starts at the upper right-hand corner, and moves right-to-left as it goes down the page. Follow this guide for an easy understanding.



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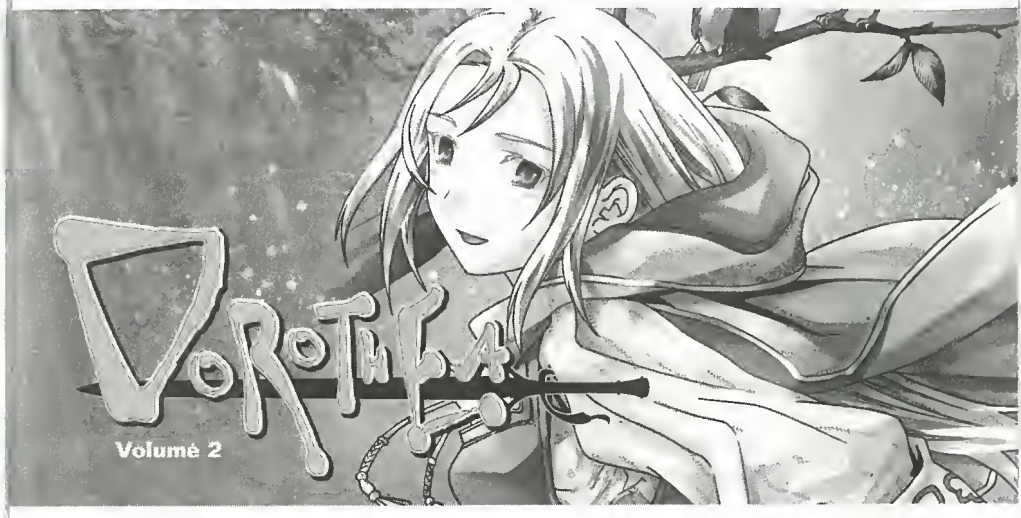
DOROTHEA'S CRUSADE CONTINUES IN JULY!



By Cuvie. When she finally gets her first taste of war, Dorothea is forced to kill for the first time. She's not able to shake off the experience, despite attempts to rationalize her actions as necessary. Later, she confronts a band of soldiers trying to loot a home and attack the widow who lives there. But her savior role is short-lived when she is forced to face the consequences of her earlier actions.

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